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CHRISTIANS FOR
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Understanding Israel and world events from a Biblical perspective

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Iron dome anti-missile system fires interception missiles as rockets fired from the Gaza Strip to Israel, as it seen from Ashkelon, on 13 May 2023. | Photo: Flash90

Israel Celebrates 75th Birthday Under Siege

Israel celebrates its 75th birthday under siege. But the Lord will protect His people.

As Israel celebrated the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the State of Israel on 14 May 1948, the country was under attack.

The month of May this year witnessed escalation between the Iranian-sponsored terror group Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) in Gaza and the Israeli army (IDF).

The PIJ fired more than 1,300 rockets and mortar shells at Israel. Some rockets reached Israeli towns in the centre of the country and even the Jerusalem area. Two people were killed in these rocket attacks: a woman in Rehovot and a Palestinian worker in the Gaza area.

Of the projectiles fired at Israel, about a quarter landed in Gaza itself, taking the lives of four Palestinian Arabs. The Iron Dome, Israel's air defence system, intercepted 371 rockets. The Israeli army carried out a total of more than 370 airstrikes against PIJ targets in Gaza. These included

the use of regular fighter jets and remotely piloted aircraft. The Israeli air force liquidated six top commanders of the Palestinian terror group. However, these liquidations did not cause an immediate effect on PIJ's ability to continue its rocket attacks.

The fact that Hamas stayed out of the fighting cannot be taken as a sign that Israel's deterrent power has increased. Both Hamas and Hezbollah showed patience, probably on the orders of the Iranian regime. It is Iran that determines the course of the war of attrition against Israel. The regime in Tehran continues to supply sophisticated weapons to Hamas in Gaza and the West Bank, and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Iran is waging a war of attrition against Israel through various armies. The escalation in terror, including that in Judea and Samaria, is the result of the Islamic Republic's strategy. The ultimate goal of this strategy is the destruction of the state of Israel, as officials of the regime in Tehran have repeatedly said.

The question now is when Israeli will take pre-emptive action.

Let us remember that the Lord is bringing His people home, to settle the land, and be a blessing to all people—including the Palestinians and all the surrounding nations. He will protect His people, and destroy the enemies of Israel.

"I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip - he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord watches over you—the Lord is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all harm - he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore." *Psalm 121*

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Israel, the Land of Absolute Miracles



Colophon

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

Mission

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

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The Real Catastrophe

■ Andrew Tucker
International Editor | Christians for Israel

This year, on 15 May, the hypocrisy and utter corruption of the United Nations surely reached new heights. On that day, the UN commemorated for the first time the Palestinian ‘Nakba’. On that day, the nations of the world gave the Chairman of the PLO, Mahmoud Abbas, a platform to spew lies and filthy libels at the Jewish people.

The Arabic word ‘Nakba’ means ‘catastrophe’. By adopting the Palestinian term, the UN is, in practice, condemning the Jewish longing for a homeland and denying the State of Israel’s legitimacy as a homeland for the Jewish people.

According to Abbas and the UN, the creation of the State of Israel in May 1948 was instigated by the international community but primarily by the US and UK, which must now be rectified by abolishing the Jewish State.

By qualifying the establishment of Israel as a ‘catastrophe’, the UN is actively complicit in rewriting history.

The real catastrophe is not the establishment of the State of Israel but the Palestinian rejection of it at the expense of its own people.

The real criminals in this tragedy are the Palestinian leaders—from the Great Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin Husseini in the 1920s to 1950s, to Yasser Arafat from the 1970s, succeeded by the equally corrupt Mahmoud Abbas, who is currently serving the 18th year of a four year term of office, while his personal coffers and those of his clan are filled with the dollars given by the international community that, year after year, pours mainly Western taxpayer money into the ephemeral dream of the ‘two-state solution’.

And the victims are the ordinary Palestinians themselves, the vast majority of whom simply want to live in peace with their neighbours.

But the victims are not entirely innocent. The fact is that, for one hundred years, the Arab-speaking peoples who live in the territory of Palestine have allowed



Palestinians watch the speech of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on television from New York, in the city of Rafah, southern Gaza Strip, on 15 May, 2023. President Mahmoud Abbas speaks during a high-level event commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Nakba at UN Headquarters in New York. | Photo: Flash90

themselves to be governed by a leadership that has sacrificed the well-being of its own people in order to oppose, by whatever means, the possibility that the Jewish people might exist as a nation anywhere in land that has belonged to the Islamic world.

As a consequence, the Arab Palestinian leaders have brought upon themselves and their people the misery in which they now find themselves: many of them living as stateless refugees without realistic hope of a truly independent national existence of their own.

The Palestinian Arabs have rejected multiple concrete opportunities to live peacefully side-by-side the Jewish nation. In the 1920s, they ignored the fact that Transjordan had been created as an independent, autonomous region for the Arab population of Palestine. Instead, they launched a series of pogroms against the Jews, frustrating every effort to find a way for Jews and Arabs to live side-by-side as nations in Palestine. In the 1930s, they rejected the Peel Plan (1937) and McDonald White Paper (1938), and in 1947 they rejected the UN Partition Plan. In the 1960s and 1970s, they continued to launch terror attacks against the Jewish state, even though the Arab State of Jordan was in control of the West Bank. After initial

agreement was reached between Israel and the PLO in the Oslo Accords (1993-1995), the PLO leadership (Yasser Arafat, succeeded by Mahmoud Abbas) rejected many US-sponsored Israeli offers that would have given them up to 97% of the territory they were claiming: 2000 (Clinton), 2008 (Bush) and 2014 (Kerry/Obama).

On every occasion, the Arabs have chosen to prefer violence against Jews over territorial compromise.

While the Jewish people have got on with the hard work of building a successful state, the Palestinians have squandered every chance of doing the same.

Perhaps the greatest catastrophe is the fact that the international community has been complicit in this tragedy. Since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the nations of the world have turned a blind eye to the corruption and hatred that has characterised the Palestinian leadership. Worse, they have aided and abetted the Arab/Islamic/Palestinian misuse and abuse of the UN system.

By holding the ‘Nakba’ event just a few weeks ago in New York, the United Nations has demonstrated that it is utterly bereft of any moral compass. It has been hijacked by the enemies of peace.

Prayer Points

Israel

- “How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity!” (Psalm 133:1). Give thanks that things have calmed down a little in Israel again after months of unrest and demonstrations over the influence of the Supreme Court. Pray for wisdom for the government as to how best to respond to the protests and proposed legislative changes.
- Pray for Israel’s protection from cyberattacks. As a world, we are becoming increasingly dependent on internet technologies, which bring with it many vulnerabilities. This is especially true for Israel which has many enemies.
- In addition to the many challenges Israel faces, there is certainly a lot of good news to report. There has been a lot of rain recently, which has replenished water supplies. Ground-breaking discoveries are being made in the medical field, and Jews continue to emigrate to Israel every day. Give thanks for these blessings.

Israel & the Nations

- Israel’s enemies are seeing the divisions that have

recently prevailed in Israel and are looking at ways to capitalise on this and attack Israel. Pray for protection from this.

- ”Lord, you are my God; I will exalt You and praise Your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done wonderful things, things planned long ago” (Isaiah 25:1). Unfortunately, there are still many Christians who don’t think Israel plays a vital role in God’s plan and sometimes even oppose the State of Israel. Pray that this will change, and people will see that God is forever faithful to Israel and will bring His people home.

Christians for Israel

- From 11-16 May, over 80 leaders from the Christians for Israel network worldwide gathered in Jerusalem for five days of fellowship. The theme of the conference was ‘Celebrating Israel’. Give thanks for the opportunity to be together, encourage one another, visit projects of Christians for Israel and learn from the Bible about God’s everlasting faithfulness to the Jewish people.

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

Caught in Violence, *Bnei Menashe* Face ‘Appalling’ Conditions



| Photo: Shutterstock

■ **Avi Kumar**
Writer | JNS

Members of the tribe, who claim descent from the biblical *Menashe*, told JNS what it has been like taking refuge in military camps.

Caught in the middle of violence between *Meitei* Hindus and *Kuki* Christians, the *Bnei Menashe*, who claim descent from a ‘lost’ biblical tribe and whom Israel accepts upon conversion, have been displaced from their homes. The *Bnei Menashe* identify as Jews, most belonging to the *Mizo* and *Kuki* ethnic groups that hail from the hills of the northeastern Indian state of Manipur, while *Meiteis* live in the valley.

Some 200 homes and churches have been set ablaze in Manipur. Yoel Bayta, a *Bnei Menashe* father of four, has been killed, and synagogues, *Torah* scrolls and a *mikvah* (Jewish ritual bath) reportedly have been burnt. Many have been living in shelters awaiting the chance to return home, and some people have been unable to reach missing family members.

“The conditions we face are appalling,” Lalam Hangshing, chairman of the *Bnei Menashe* Council, told JNS.

The recent violence has broken out largely in the state’s capital, Imphal, and the village of Beit Shalom.

Lemuel Haokip, another communal leader, told JNS that the homes of many members of the group were razed, and the *Bnei Menashe* had to flee to the forest to hide until the Indian military arrived. Individuals are now housed in military camps operated by the Assam Rifles—part of the Central Armed Police Forces under India’s home affairs ministry—and others are hiding in private residences.

Conditions in the military camps are “very chaotic,” and the *Bnei Menashe* and others are “living in squalor,” Haokip told JNS.

Those in the camps have to wait in line for three hours to receive basic meals, rice and

lentils, with more than 100 people assigned to a single toilet and shower facility, according to Haokip. People are sleeping on mats on floors or in makeshift tents.

The government has been trying to return people to their homes, but there are still reports of mobs attacking the camps and vehicles parked outside the camps, said Haokip.

Government Has Behaved Like Medieval Warlords

Disagreements about which ‘scheduled’ tribes the Indian state recognises triggered the recent violence. For years, the *Meitei* Hindus, who form the majority of Manipur’s population, have sought recognition in the category for which the government sets aside jobs, college admissions and elected seats, responding to historical discrimination and exclusion.

Haokip and Hangshing told JNS that only scheduled tribes can purchase land in the Manipur hill region, and there is a fear that if the *Meitei* are granted that status, then they will take over the land inhabited currently by the *Kuki*, *Mizo*, *Naga* and other hill tribes.

India deployed its army to Manipur with shoot-on-sight orders to halt the riots.

“It is just appalling that the state government took two days to quell the riots, but the central government of New Delhi was able to do it in no time,” Hangshing told JNS. “The state government has behaved like medieval warlords and is complicit in this.”

Rioters have attacked buses and private vehicles transporting displaced people, according to Hangshing. “Whichever corner the army can’t get to, the *Bnei Menashe*”

He added that there are reports of *Meitei* attacking houses of worship used by Christians from their own group. “The fact that they torched churches attended by

their own ethnic group shows how much disregard they have,” he said.

An estimated 5,000 *Bnei Menashe* remain in India, and nearly that same number has made *Aliyah* in the past several decades. They must undergo conversion to be officially recognised as Jews in Israel, and as such, be able to serve in the military, receive financial and other benefits, and marry. The government and religious leadership view the *Bnei Menashe* as a ‘lost’ tribe.

The *Bnei Menashe*, or ‘Sons of Manasseh’, claim descent from one of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel, exiled by the Assyrian Empire more than 2,700 years ago. Their ancestors wandered through Central Asia and the Far East before settling in what is today northeastern India along the borders of Burma and Bangladesh, according to Shavei Israel, an NGO that promotes the immigration of *Bnei Menashe*. (Some *Bnei Menashe* leaders dispute some of this narrative.)

Shimon Gangte, a *Bnei Menashe* leader in Israel, told JNS that the Indian government has blocked the Internet and social media, and some displaced people lack the means to charge their phones. This hampers their ability to contact their loved ones in this difficult time.

There is no indication that there is antisemitism involved in the current violence, which seems to involve the *Bnei Menashe* insofar as they are *Kuki* and *Mizo*.

Isaac (Yitchak) Thangjom serves as the Israel-based director of Degel Menashe, a group that aids *Bnei Menashe* people in India and Israel and that grew out of an oral history project funded by the Jewish Federation of New Mexico.

“This is ethnic cleansing,” he told JNS. “We urge the Indian government to expedite a comprehensive investigation. The perpetrators should be brought to justice.

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Short News

Israeli Schoolgirls Shine at European Maths Olympiad



At the European Girls’ Mathematics Olympiad (EGMO) in Slovenia, for the first time, a team of young Israeli math students took home all the medals available. The young math talents won the gold, silver, and bronze medals after competing against 214 participants from 54 countries. Not only was this an extraordinary achievement for the young students, but one student, in particular, stood out from the crowd. Participant Noga Friedman took home the gold medal for her performance and took first place in the competition with a ‘perfect score.’ The three students who represented Israel at the EGMO competition were from Rehovot and Herzliya and attended 10th through 12th grades. The competition has existed since 2012, and Israel has already brought home 19 medals since its first participation in 2016. | Photo: Future Scientists Center and Ministry of Education.

Israel—A Blessing to the World

The state of Israel, celebrating 75 years, is often portrayed as a ‘think tank’. Israel’s inventions include innovations made for the military—yet transformed to bring great blessings in the civilian sector, eg. medicine. One example: The ‘Surgical Rehearsal Platform’ (SRP), which helps surgeons practice and plan operations using dynamic 3D images. Originally, this was an innovation for pilot flight simulators. The transformation of this military development can be traced back to veterans Moty Avisar and Alon Geri.

Israil Direct Flights from Ramon Airport to Istanbul



Israeli airline Israil has announced direct flights from Ramon Airport in Eilat (southern Israel) to Istanbul starting in mid-June. The flights will operate twice a week, on Mondays and Saturdays. This is the first time that flights from Ramon Airport will go to the Turkish capital. Round-trip airfare is US \$250 per person, and a two-night package including transfers to and from the airport will cost from US \$385 per person, the company said.

Israel's Reaction to Latest Developments

■ Yochanan Visser

Correspondent in Israel

With hopes of an anti-Iran alliance with Arab Gulf states looking dim, Israel turns to new allies in Central Asia to join the fight.

Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen is currently very active in forming a new international bloc against Iran after the Gulf states of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates restored relations with the Islamic Republic. Iran, meanwhile, is busy strengthening and expanding the so-called 'resistance axis' against Israel, as we shall see.

Cohen Building New Anti-Iran Bloc

Cohen is currently expanding Israel's relations with countries in central Asia, with one of those countries being Azerbaijan, a Shiite Muslim country bordering Iran.

Cohen announced during the opening of the Azerbaijan embassy in Tel Aviv on 29 March that he would travel to the capital Baku within a month for talks with the government of Azerbaijan.

That visit took place on Tuesday, 18 April, and was mainly about 'strategic challenges' that Azerbaijan and Israel have in common.

Cohen said after his meeting with President Ilham Aliyev that the conversation mainly focused on 'the fight against terrorism' and on expanding 'cooperation' between Israel and Azerbaijan.

Cohen led a thirty-person delegation from Israel and discussed possible contracts in the fields of security, defence, cyber security and innovations in Azerbaijan's agriculture. The trade volume between Israel and Azerbaijan currently stands at more than \$230 million, but this amount is expected to double in the coming years.

As mentioned, however, Cohen's main focus was on strengthening defence and intelligence cooperation with the government in Baku.

At the end of his visit to Azerbaijan, Cohen said: "Israel and Azerbaijan share the same perception of the Iranian threat. The Ayatollah regime threatens both of our regions, financing terrorism and destabilising the entire Middle East. We must take action together to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear capabilities."

According to various media reports, Israel is operating from Azerbaijan's territory through its spy agency Mossad, while Iran has repeatedly accused its neighbour of facilitating Mossad actions against its nuclear programme.

For example, the Iran nuclear archive that Mossad agents stole from a warehouse in a suburb of Tehran in January 2018 was smuggled to Baku by Mossad in two trucks.

The archive was then flown to Israel from an airport in Azerbaijan.

Mossad reportedly also launched unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) attacks against nuclear facilities in Iran from Azerbaijan.

Cohen's visit to Baku came amid steadily growing tension between Iran and Azerbaijan.

In early April, Azerbaijan expelled four Iranian diplomats suspected of terrorist activities and espionage.

It was the latest incident in a long series of incidents between the two countries, and a war between the two neighbours can no longer be ruled out.

When that happens, Israel will most likely assist Azerbaijan with more weapons and military advice.

Israel has been supplying arms to Azerbaijan on an unprecedented scale, with flight track data showing that 92 cargo planes from Azerbaijan have landed at Uvdia Air Force Base near Eilat since 2016.

The weapons Israel supplied to Azerbaijan were crucial in the country's military victory over Armenia in 2020 and September 2022, when another round of fighting broke out over the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave.

Israel has now strengthened relations with yet another country neighbouring Iran.

After his visit to Azerbaijan, Cohen flew on to Turkmenistan, where he opened the permanent embassy of Israel in the capital Ashgabat. The Israeli embassy in Turkmenistan is now housed in a new building only 17 kilometres from the border with Iran.

The top Israeli diplomat said his visit should be classified as historic and said he was in Turkmenistan to discuss strategic matters related to 'regional security'.

The visit to Turkmenistan was to be viewed as part of an Israeli initiative aimed at strengthening relations with countries in central Asia, Cohen said.

New Israeli Initiative

This new diplomatic initiative gained momentum after Iran, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia recently restored relations with each other and decided to reopen embassies and other diplomatic missions.

The rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia dashed the Israeli government's hope of building a regional coalition against the Islamic Republic with Arab Gulf countries.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu discussed the rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia in a recent interview with the American TV station CNBC and claimed it had more to do with the situation in Yemen, where Saudi Arabia leads a pro-government coalition of Muslim countries fighting the Iranian-backed Ansar Allah, or Houthi militia.

This militia is part of Iran's resistance axis and repeatedly carried out attacks on Saudi Arabia using Iranian-supplied ballistic missiles and UAVs.

Normalisation of Relations with Saudi Arabia?

During the CNBC interview, Netanyahu did not rule out that Israel could still normalise relations with Saudi Arabia and hinted that there were still contacts with the government in Riyadh.

Netanyahu said Israel as a world leader in innovation was 'important' to the oil-rich kingdom, a clear reference to the largely covert activities of Israeli innovation companies in Saudi Arabia.

Israeli companies are reportedly involved in the construction of the megacity NEOM, a futuristic project along the Saudi Red Sea coast that involves green energy and hydro agriculture.

The Prime Minister was also asked what he thought about recent visits to Saudi Arabia by Hamas leaders and a delegation from the Palestinian Authority.

Netanyahu downplayed these meetings, saying they could have been about the wave of terror that has been plaguing Israel for some time.

This now sounded implausible since Saudi Arabia has been changing its policy towards old enemies for some time now, with Hamas as an example of this, and certainly Iran.

Saudi Interests

Talks are also underway between the government in Riyadh and the regime of Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad.

These discussions concern the restoration of relations between Syria and Saudi Arabia and reconstruction aid from the Kingdom for the devastated predominantly Arab country.

Commentators specialising in Saudi Arabia see all these developments as proof that the government in Riyadh is only interested in its own interests but, at the same time,



Foreign Minister Eli Cohen shoring up new allies for Israel in the fight against Iran. | Photo: Flash90

does not rule out the possibility of normalisation of relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia in the future.

However, there is clearly a change in the course of the largest Arab country, which is widely seen as a response to Israel's internal turmoil over the judicial overhaul.

This is a wrong assessment, too, since Riyadh changed course after the United States failed to meet certain demands to Washington for normalisation with Israel, which had almost nothing to do with the Jewish state but everything with Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman's distrust of President Joe Biden's Administration.

The two leaders have had a difficult relationship from the outset of Biden's presidency and had many differences of opinion on important issues.

Israel's Change of Course

For Israel, Saudi Arabia's change in its policies vis-a-vis Iran was apparently the reason for the shift of attention to Muslim countries in Central Asia in light of the ever-growing threat Iran poses to the Jewish state.

Israel is also reaching out to the European Union because of Iran's growing threat and wants the EU to increase pressure on the regime in Tehran.

Cohen was recently in Spain which is slated to take over the EU presidency soon, and met with EU Foreign Policy chief, Joseph Borrell.

During his conversation with Borrell, the Israeli top diplomat asked the EU to add the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps of Iran to the list of terrorist organisations and to support referring Iran to the UN Security Council over its escalating nuclear weapons programme.

Iran's Latest Activities and Threats

Iran, meanwhile, continues to strengthen its so-called axis of resistance, the loose coalition of terrorist movements and Shiite militias.

Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian recently embarked on a regional tour and was in Syria, Iraq and Lebanon, countries he visited last week.

Abdollahian was also the architect behind the rapprochement with the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia and was in China for talks with Saudi diplomats ahead of the reconciliation between Iran and the Kingdom.

While in Lebanon, Abdollahian toured the border with Israel, where he claimed that "Zionists only understand power" and that Iran's recent activities against Israel will lead to its "isolation and destruction."

Netanyahu reacted to Iran's escalating threats during the weekly cabinet meeting and said that Israel would not allow Iran to tighten the ring of terrorism around it.

"We are taking action on this matter around the clock, at all times, even now," Netanyahu said while vowing again to take all sorts of measures to stop the Islamic Republic.

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Palestinian Violence and Iran’s Multi-Front-War Against Israel

■ Yochanan Visser
Correspondent in Israel

Within one week at the beginning of May, Israel and the Palestinian terror groups in Gaza came close to war again twice. The pattern of these recent confrontations differs from what we saw in the past.

The conflict started on Tuesday, 2 May, when Palestinian terror groups in Gaza fired a total of 104 rockets and mortar shells at southern Israel. Another Gaza war seemed inevitable.

The renewal of the rocket attacks on southern Israel happened after it was revealed that a Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) leader from Jenin, who was being held by Israel, had died in an Israeli hospital after he went on a hunger strike. Khader Adnan had gone on a hunger strike for 86 days before he died.

Immediately following the announcement of his death, threats emanated from Gaza.

PIJ published a compilation photo on Facebook and Instagram showing missile batteries alongside masked terrorists. “You will burn in our hell,” it read in Arabic and Hebrew. Soon after, rockets and mortar shells began to rain down on southern Israel.

Iron Dome

The government in Jerusalem announced a strong response would be forthcoming, and indeed for a short while, it seemed this could be true.

I personally observed six Israeli Air Force (IAF) Hercules cargo planes transferring Iron Dome missile defence batteries from the Golan Heights to the border area around Gaza.

It was reported that the IDF was deploying additional Iron Dome systems in both the northern part of Israel bordering Lebanon as well as the Gaza belt.

PIJ and Hamas fired 104 rockets into southern Israel. Iron Dome shot down 24 of these projectiles, while 25 failed to reach their target.

The IAF responded with a total of 16 airstrikes against Hamas and PIJ targets in Gaza, destroying a part of the military infrastructure there.

According to Hamas, one civilian was killed, and five other civilians were injured, while eyewitnesses reported the IAF planes were shot at with surface-to-air missiles.

‘Weak Reaction?’

Shortly after midnight on Tuesday, 2 May, it was announced that Egypt, along with Qatar and the United Nations, was making a frantic effort to negotiate a ceasefire. By 4am, the rocket fire was slowly halted.

Then came massive criticism of the Israeli government over its ‘weak response’. National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir challenged Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to fire him for refusing to take



Palestinians protest while Israeli Security Forces stand guard in the West Bank. | Photo: Flash90

part in Knesset votes. Without Otzma Yehudit, Ben Gvir’s far-right party that holds five seats in the Knesset, the government would fall.

Before the IAF responded to the rocket fire, the possibility that a second front might open up in the border area with Lebanon was taken into account in Jerusalem.

It became clear that the Israeli response to the rocket fire from Gaza had been only an initial one. Israeli warplanes and suicide drones suddenly carried out a massive attack on the leadership of PIJ and on the military infrastructure of the organisation. Four top commanders of the Iranian-backed terror organisation were assassinated in their homes. The IAF used suicide drones and guided precision missiles to eliminate the PIJ top, as it had done in August 2022 when the Israeli air force took out the entire PIJ top in Gaza in an operation that lasted only one hour. As in 2022, the recent operation was the result of months of intelligence gathering during which the phones of the PIJ commanders were eavesdropped.

The IAF hit at least five military outposts belonging to PIJ and destroyed a large number of missiles that were ready for use against Israeli civilian targets.

The apartments of PIJ commanders Haij Tariq Izz-a-Din and Dr Jamal Khadaoun in Gaza’s a-Shahdaa street were hit by precision missiles that destroyed only the homes of the PIJ commanders and not the whole building. The same counted for the apartment of another PIJ commander, Khalil al-Bahtini.

The IAF used a so-called suicide drone to assassinate a fourth PIJ commander, Jihad al-Ahnam, who was the head of the PIJ southern division in Gaza.

Among those who were assassinated was the PIJ terrorist who planned the murder of Tali Hatuel and her four daughters, who were shot to death in their car near the Kissufim crossing in Gaza in May 2004.

Immediately after the beginning of the new Israeli operation, which was dubbed

‘Shield and Arrow’, the IDF Home Front brigade issued guidelines for residents of the so-called Gaza belt en declared the area of the Gaza border a no-go zone.

Bomb shelters in the south of Israel were opened, and schools were closed while people were allowed to work from home.

All these measures were taken in anticipation of a new round of rocket fire after both PIJ and Hamas vowed to take revenge.

The revenge came on Wednesday afternoon, 10 May, when PIJ launched massive salvos of rockets on the south and centre of Israel.

Hamas

Hamas stayed out of the fray while the IAF launched 40 counterstrikes - another indication that the Iranian Axis of resistance isn’t interested in a wider confrontation with the Israeli military at the moment.

The Israeli army is preparing for a long-anticipated multi-front war with the Iranian Axis, during which approximately 1,300 rockets per day are expected to be fired at Israel from three or even four fronts (Yemen).

According to Israeli defence officials, Iran has now accumulated enough highly enriched uranium hexafluoride gas for the production of 5 nuclear warheads.

As Israel’s military is far superior to that of Iran and even to the many Iranian proxies, Iran plans to launch a multi-front war under a nuclear umbrella. For the time being, it uses its Palestinian proxies in both Gaza and Israel’s biblical heartland for a war of attrition against the Jewish state.

The IDF and Israeli political leadership are unwilling to completely root out these proxies for fear of the international response - despite PM Netanyahu’s conviction that Iran is responsible for 95% of the Palestinian violence against Israel and the knowledge that PIJ and Hamas are now working on a missile capacity in Palestinian cities like Jenin and Shechem (Nablus).

Short News

Israel Prize Rewarded to Female Neuroimmunologist



Internationally renowned Weizmann Institute of Science Professor of Neuroimmunology Michal Schwartz received the Israel Prize for life sciences on Israel’s 75th Independence Day. A trailblazer in her field, Schwartz is being recognised for her discovery of the connection between the brain and the immune system, which has led to possibilities for harnessing the body’s immune system to treat neurodegenerative brain diseases such as Alzheimer’s and dementia. Schwartz is only the fourth woman to receive an Israel Prize for science since the prize’s inception in 1953. The Israel Prize is the country’s highest award. | Photo: Israel Weizmann Institute of Science.

Poll: Most Israeli Citizens are Proud to be Israelis

Only 49% of Israeli citizens are ‘very proud’ to be Israelis, a new poll found. This number is down 7% from last year. The poll showed that most of those who define themselves as right-wing are ‘very proud’ to be Israeli, compared with only 22% of those who define themselves as left-wing. Overall, 81% of respondents said they are either ‘fairly proud’ or ‘very proud’ to be Israeli.

‘Common Blue’ now National Butterfly



The common blue butterfly has been named ‘Butterfly of Israel’ in a special ceremony with the Minister of Environmental Protection, Idit Silman. The naming of the insect was a joint initiative of several organisations, including the Association of Butterfly Enthusiasts, with the aim of joining other nations that have a butterfly as a national symbol. The selection of the ‘National Butterfly of Israel’ joins the list of the country’s well-known natural symbols, such as the national bird Upupa and other symbols such as the anemone and the olive. This butterfly was chosen to represent the often-overlooked division of insects that are an important part of the ecosystem. The common blue butterfly can be found throughout much of the country almost year-round.



What preceded the founding of Israel—Part 3

Treason and Gas Chambers were to Prevent Jewish Statehood

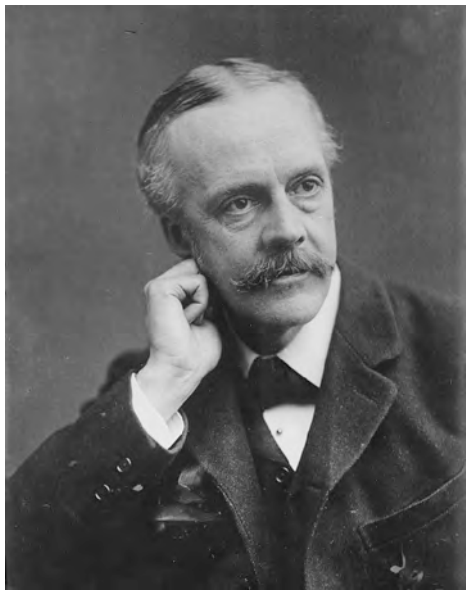
■ **Wim Kortenoeven**
Author, Journalist and Former Politician

26 April 2023 marked the 75th anniversary of the restoration of Jewish independence in Israel. Naturally, the pan-Arab war of annihilation against the Jewish state, which began immediately afterwards, was also remembered. In that war, the army of Trans-Jordan was led by British officers, even though London had made a commitment in 1917 to facilitate a Jewish national home in the lands of Palestine. There was, however, from the outset, much more British treachery against Zionism. But ironically, it was precisely British troops who prevented a German holocaust of the Jews in Palestine, thus securing the foundation of Israel.

On 9 December 1917, the first day of the *Hanukkah* festival, British military units led by General Edmund Allenby captured Jerusalem from the Turkish army in Palestine led by German General Erich von Falkenhayn. Allenby's ceremonial entry, two days later on foot through the Jaffa Gate, marked the end of exactly 400 years of Turkish-Ottoman rule of the Land of Israel, although it would take until September 1918 before even the last Turkish troops in its north were defeated. The British conquest also marked the first return of European armies since the Crusaders had been expelled from the holy city in 1244. In that light, Allenby is reported to have declared, "Now the Crusades are complete".

British Mandate

Exactly a week before the capture of Jerusalem, British foreign secretary and Christian Zionist Arthur Balfour, (pictured right) had issued the famous declaration, later named after him, in which Britain promised the Jewish people a national home in the land of Palestine. Palestine then consisted of the area of the present-day states of Israel (including Judea and Samaria) and Jordan. The Balfour Declaration later became an official part of international agreements on the future status of the territories conquered from Turkey. At the San Remo Conference in April 1920, Britain was granted the mandate over Palestine, with implementation of the Balfour Declaration as its central task. On 1 July that year, British military administration over Palestine was replaced by a provisional mandate government for civil administration, which was later formally recognised by the newly formed League of Nations (precursor to the UN). The mandate order referred to promoting 'large-scale Jewish settlement' in the entire area, i.e. including Trans-Jordan plus Judea and Samaria.



The British conquest of Jerusalem was greeted with jubilant headlines, as seen here in the New York Herald | Photo: Wikipedia

Violation of the Mandate

On 16 September 1922, however, London split off the eastern part of Palestine (78% of the mandate area) and closed it to Jewish settlement. It was then handed over as an 'emirate under British supervision' to the Mecca-based Hashemite emir (Prince) Abdallah, a British ally during World War I. This was the first of a series of gross violations of the Balfour Declaration and mandate.

The Balfour Declaration later became an official part of international agreements on the future status of the territories conquered from Turkey.

The background to this policy was threefold. Firstly, even before accepting the mandate, prominent British policymakers had concluded that British imperialist interests were inconsistent with Christian-Zionist-inspired British promises to the Jewish Zionist leadership. Secondly, part of the British political and administrative establishment was driven by virulent antisemitism. And finally, the mandate authorities failed to quell violent Arab resistance to Jewish immigration that had already begun in 1920. That violence, shockingly, had been directly promoted by British officials to make the establishment of the promised Jewish national home impossible in advance.

Mohammed Amin al-Hoesseini

According to diary entries by the head of the British army's political service, Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen, his colleague Colonel Bertie Waters-Taylor was the chief implementer of that treacherous policy and acted with the full approval of his superiors. On 1 April 1920, Waters-Taylor held a meeting with the main anti-Jewish agitator in the area: Mohammed Amin al-Hoesseini, a younger brother of the then Mufti (Muslim leader) of Jerusalem. Waters-Taylor maintained to Hussein that Zionism was neither popular with the British Mandate administration nor with the government in London. Also, he indicated to Hussein that an Arab outbreak of violence during the then-upcoming Easter weekend might lead the British to abandon the plan for a Jewish national home.

Hussein's supporters followed that advice and organised bloody anti-Jewish riots in Jerusalem the following Friday. The British had withdrawn their troops so the Arabs could attack and loot unhindered. However, Hussein had been so 'visible' in the incitement that the authorities did have to arrest him. However, he escaped and was sentenced in absentia to 10 years, was granted amnesty a year later and was appointed 'grand mufti' (Muslim leader with absolute authority) of Jerusalem by the British high commissioner on 11 April 1921. Three weeks later, 47 Jews were killed in new pogroms initiated by Hussein. The British mandate administration subsequently restricted Jewish immigration, and anti-Jewish violence became structural.

Waves of Terror

A new series of bloody pogroms took place in 1929, the victims of which included the Jewish community of Hebron. In the aftermath, London published a mandate policy document in October 1930 that proclaimed new immigration restrictions on Jews, as well as measures to make it difficult to sell property to Jews. That 'White Paper' also denied that the development of a Jewish national home would be the central mandate.



SS Colonel Walter Rauff (right, photographed after his arrest in 1945), inventor of the mobile gas chamber, was charged with carrying out a Holocaust of Jews in Palestine. | Photo: War History Online

In 1936, a new wave of Arab terror began, with Nazi Germany also involved in the background. Hussein demanded that the British administration stop Jewish immigration and ban the sale of land to Jews. The violence swelled into an outright civil war that lasted until the summer of 1939 and led to the result the Arabs wanted. In defiance of protests from the League of Nations, London decreed even more far-reaching Jewish immigration restrictions. For five years, only 10,000 Jews were allowed to enter annually and 25,000 once. Afterwards, Jewish immigration was to be subject to Arab approval. This measure cost countless European Jews their lives, as they could not flee to Palestine and were not welcome elsewhere in the world either.

El Alamein

During World War II, Hussein fled to Berlin after much wandering, where, as a guest of Hitler, he conspired with Nazi leaders to have as many European Jews exterminated as possible and provoke violence against Jews elsewhere. He was also involved in planning a holocaust of Jews in Egypt and Palestine. The Germans had a special ‘SS-Einsatzgruppe’ ready for this in 1942, commanded by SS Colonel Walter Rauff. This also maintained operational contacts with the Mufti, and under their cooperation, the construction of gas chambers and crematoria was planned in the Biblical town of Dothan, just south of the Palestinian-Arab city of Jenin.

Unwanted Guardian

The Einsatzgruppe had been scheduled to travel to Palestine via Egypt in the wake of the German Africa Corps. But the German advance eastward was halted by a British army commanded by Bernard Montgomery near the Egyptian town of El-Alamein in October 1942. Had that not happened, the Jewish communities in Egypt and the lands of Palestine would probably have been exterminated by Rauff’s units and their local cronies, and of course, the state of Israel would not have been founded. And so, Britain, which had wanted to stop the national Jewish rebirth, itself still became its unwitting guardian.



Visit of Lord Allenby and Mr Heinrichs at the new YMCA building in Jerusalem. | Photo: Wikimedia



From Photo. Copyright by Underwood & Underwood

THE MOST DRAMATIC MOMENT IN FOUR CENTURIES

IT OCCURRED at half past seven on December 11, 1917. At that hour General Allenby, British Commander in Chief of the army in Palestine, entered Jerusalem, victorious, ending at the instant he passed beneath the flat arch of the "Friend Gate" four centuries of Ottoman domination over the Holy City of Christians and Jews and "the sanctuary" of Mohammedans. Throughout the Christian world a deep breath of exultation was drawn. The Turks had been forced to withdraw before the British commander's subtler strategy and true to the tradition, the victor entered the city unarmed. The sanctity of the place was put by General Allenby before every other consideration, and not a man of his command but shared his consciousness of the tremendous history that was making.

General Edmund Allenby arrives in Jerusalem, 11 December 1917. | Photo: Tower of David Museum Archives



Mohammed Amin al-Hoesseini inspects a unit of the SS division Handschar, which he founded. This unit murdered 12,600 of the 14,000 Bosnian Jews. | Photo: Wikipedia

Back in Jerusalem at Last

■ **Rev Cornelis Kant**
Executive Director | Christians for Israel International

From 11-16 May, 80 representatives from Christians for Israel International—coming from 22 different countries—gathered in Jerusalem for a 4-day Forum.

Normally, this Forum takes place every two years. Due to Covid-19, however, the last Forum was held in 2019. During the time together, we listen to speakers from



The participants at this year's Forum at Sde Boker.

■ **Dr Leon Meijer**
Chairman | Christians for Israel International

One of the highlights of the C4I Forum in Jerusalem was the visit to The Jewish Agency on 14 May. Danielle Mor, together with Major General (Res.) Doron Almog, the chairman of The Jewish Agency, welcomed us at the Agency's headquarters. The Jewish Agency is responsible for helping Jewish people making *Aliyah* and their first integration into Israel's society.

Almog is a former Major General of the Israeli Defence Force and was a commander of the raid on Entebbe in 1976. During our visit, he shared his inner convictions. At the age of 22, he lost his younger brother Eran in the Yom Kippur War. His brother was wounded and left behind after his tank was struck. "And therefore", Doron Almog emphasised, "my main motto in my work in the military, and now as the chairman of The Jewish Agency, is to leave no one behind". Almog honoured Koen Carlier and Ira Sulim for their work in Ukraine. On behalf of Christians for Israel, they (and their dedicated team) are helping Jewish refugees from all over the country to leave for Israel.

Prophetic

It had not appeared to me at the time that Doron Almog's words were prophetic. That happened the next day when Rev Willem Glashouwer opened the Word of God with us on the Mount of Olives. Overlooking Jerusalem and the Temple Mount, Glashouwer explained how God has been planning to bring His people back. In *Ezekiel 39:28*, God states that He is responsible for the return of the Jews from exile. That Scripture ends with: "I will leave none of My people behind". The life motto of the chairman of The Jewish Agency, responsible for the return of Jews to their homeland, comes directly from Scripture.



Rev Cornelis Kant with some Forum participants at the Western Wall.

various countries (including Israel), visit projects of Christians for Israel and meet with their leaders, and explore Biblical sites. This year's Forum was a blessed time of encouragement for all participants. For some of them, it was their first visit to Israel. The opportunity to meet personally, learn from each other, pray and worship together creates the unique feeling of belonging to a global (C4I) family. Doing so in the land of Israel adds an important value.



A bible teaching on the Mount of Olives by Rev Willem Glashouwer.

Terror Attacks

We had 80 participants from 23 countries who attended the Forum arrived at another difficult time for Israel. During the first days of the Forum, more than 1200 rockets were launched at Israel by Islamic Jihad in the Gaza Strip. In retaliation, Israel took out six leaders of this terror group, targeting their hiding places. Many rockets were stopped by Israel's air defence system but some still caused damage, and two people in Israel were killed. Due to the terror attacks, we had to change our programme. Our visit to a family living at the Gaza border had to be cancelled as the family had been evacuated from the area. We did, however, visit new *olim* in Kibbutz Revivim, in the southern part of the Negev desert.

Feeling Safe

The young families from Russia, Ukraine and Brazil told us why they had moved to Israel. For all of them, their Jewish identity was the reason to come to Israel and leave everything behind. The couple from Ukraine fled the war, and felt safe in Israel now, even when rockets from Islamic Jihad were trying to take away that feeling. The couples are participating in the so-called 'First Home in the Homeland' integration programme, which is supported by Christians for Israel. Seeing firsthand how much joy and comfort the project gives new immigrants encouraged us to continue our support for this project.

Young People

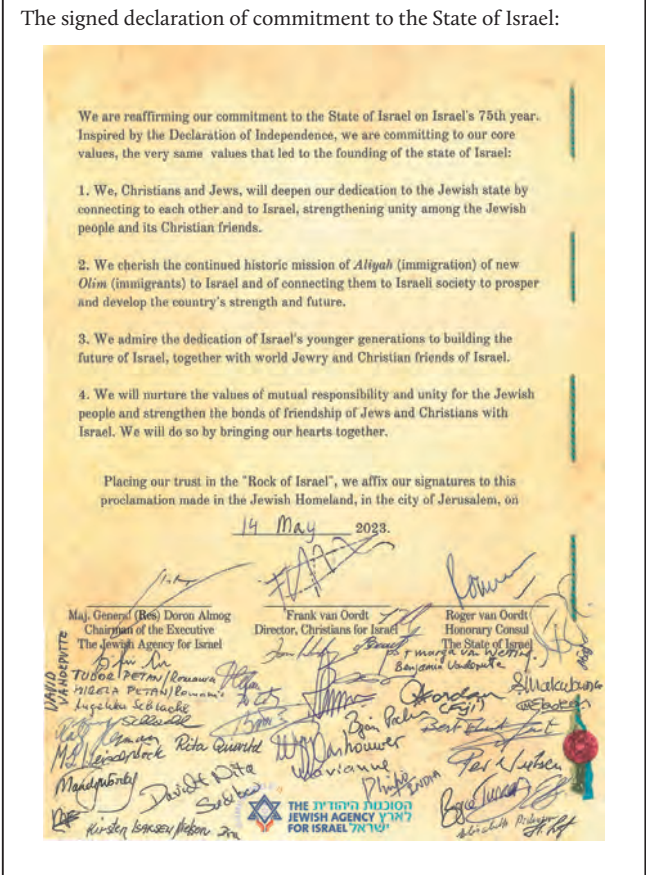
During our time together, the 80 Forum participants encouraged each other by sharing the developments in their respective regions. Praying, worshipping, listening to Bible teaching, visiting Biblical places together and talking to the people of the land strengthened the family bond among the participants. Young people from Isreality and Israel Connect used the opportunity to tell the other



Signing the Declaration with Doron Almog.

Many of the people involved in the worldwide work of Christians for Israel International are volunteers. Spending time together strengthens our common mission to spread the Biblical message about Israel in our respective countries. Our international Forum is also a fascinating melting pot of languages and cultures. It is always impressive to see how people from Africa, Asia, the America's, Oceania and Europe live their faith, and experience the role of Israel in their faith.

On 14 May 1948, David Ben Gurion, then chairman of the Jewish Agency, signed Israel's Declaration of Independence with 36 others. It was the beginning of the State of Israel. Exactly 75 years later, on 14 May 2023, representatives from the 42 countries where Christians for Israel has a branch, met in the Jewish Agency building. There, together with Doron Almog, the current Chairman of The Jewish Agency, signed a declaration expressing our commitment to the State of Israel.



participants how they use social media to inform their peers about Israel. One of the results of meeting at the Forum was the decision to start a monthly Zoom prayer meeting for young people. Participants from Germany, Austria, Italy, Vietnam and Taiwan immediately signed up.

"Now I Have Seen"

At the end of the Forum one of the participants who visited Israel for the first time gave a wonderful insight in why people should attend our next Forum. "I am interested in Israel", she said. "I got several books about Israel, but usually, after two chapters, I stopped reading. I did not get it. But on this trip, I began to understand: to see with my own eyes what God is doing; to see how Jews are still reading the Bible, and are celebrating the *Shabbat* for example, has opened my eyes for God's plan with Israel. Back home, I will finish reading these books, since now I have seen!" | Photos: Christians for Israel



The C4I Fiji delegation with Natalia Kryzhanivska, Ira Sulim and Koen Carlier from C4I Ukraine.



Centenary of the Mandate for Palestine

The Spiritual & Prophetic Significance—Part 6

■ **Hugh Kitson**

Writer, Director and Producer of the *Whose Land?* documentary

This series has previously mentioned that the San Remo Resolution, which resulted in the Mandate for Palestine that was ratified in July 1922, enshrined into international law the title deed that Almighty God had given to the Hebrew Patriarchs as an everlasting possession. Perhaps this was not obvious at the time, but I believe this was what God was doing behind the scenes 100 years ago.

At that time Great Britain, along with the empire that was attached to it, was the ‘world superpower’ of the day, although in decline by then. In the decades that followed, the United States of America would accede to that position.

Nevertheless, Great Britain and its empire was responsible for the Balfour Declaration, the dismembering of the Ottoman Empire, which had inflicted a genocide on ethnic minorities within its empire, and the implementation of the Mandate for Palestine.

The Decree of Cyrus

This wasn’t the first time in recorded history that the ‘world superpower’ of the day would be responsible for facilitating the restoration of the nation of Israel. The Bible records that the head of the Persian Empire, King Cyrus, was given a similar role during the Babylonian exile in the 6th Century BC.

What happened is recorded in a number of books in the Hebrew Scriptures, notably *2nd Chronicles* (chapter 36), as well as the *Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*. The Hebrew Bible, which has a different configuration to the Christian Old Testament, actually concludes with of the second *Book of Chronicles*, which itself closes with the decree of Cyrus:

Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: “All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is among you of all of His people? May the Lord his God be with him, and let him go up!” (*2 Chronicles 36:23*)

One could say that this decree from the Persian king was ‘the international law’ of its time. Not only do we find it in the Bible, but it is also inscribed on the ‘Cyrus Cylinder’, which comes from the ancient Persian Empire and dates back to 538 BC. Today this ancient historic artefact resides in the British Museum! For those who believe in neither the authority nor the accuracy of the Bible, God provides extra-biblical evidence of something that so many today seek to deny: the Jewish historic connection to Jerusalem!

Restoration and the Coming of Messiah

So why was the return of the Jewish people and the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple so crucial back then? There could be many answers to that question, but I would like to offer just one: to prepare the city of Jerusalem and the Jewish people for the First Coming of Messiah—the Lamb of God who came to take away the sin of the world (*John 1:29*).

More than 2,000 years after the Cyrus decree, the Lord raised up another great empire—the British Empire—the most extensive empire the world had hitherto seen. Apart from taking the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth, the British Empire would assume its ‘Cyrus’ role to facilitate the restoration of Israel to its



Cyrus Cylinder in the British Museum.

ancient homeland once again.

Sadly, many British people today hold the former British Empire in contempt, in the same way that they hold the gospel and the rebirth of the Jewish state in contempt. While there were atrocities committed in the name of the empire—after all we are a fallen humanity—nevertheless, the Lord had his purposes for the rise of the British Empire, just as with the Persian Empire in the days of Cyrus.

Some years ago, I produced and directed a documentary film, which was largely the vision my Australian historian friend Kelvin Crombie, who presented it. It was entitled ‘*The Destiny of Britain*’ and you can view a trailer (7 min) through the link given at the end of this article. It examines how Britain’s Christian heritage was instrumental in leading to the Balfour Declaration.

San Remo and the Mandate for Palestine: The Modern-Day Cyrus Decree

The San Remo Resolution, and the Mandate that followed it, which raised the Balfour Declaration to the status of an international treaty, could be likened to the ‘Cyrus Decree’ for the modern era.

As was pointed out in the earlier article looking at the San Remo Conference in some detail, the territorial extent of the Jewish national home was discussed, and while the actual boundaries were not finalised then, the intention was expressed that it should incorporate the area of Israel’s domicile during the reigns of King David and King Solomon. Included within that is the biblical heartland of Judea and Samaria, and particularly Israel’s historic capital, Jerusalem.

So, why is this latter-day ‘Cyrus Decree’ so crucial in the purposes of God? I would suggest that it is to prepare the Jewish people, who have been largely scattered across the face of the earth for two millennia, the Land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem for the Second Coming of Messiah. His mission this time? To rule and reign over the whole earth from the throne of David—His throne—in Jerusalem.

The City of the Great King—not ‘Al Quds’

The Lord Jesus once referred to Jerusalem as “the city of the great King” (*Matthew 5:35*)—in reference to Himself.

Through the Prophet Zechariah, he declared: “I will return to Zion, and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, the Mountain of the Lord of hosts, the Holy Mountain” (*Zechariah 8:3*).

Clearly, the Lord Jesus is not going to return to ‘Al Quds’ (the Arabic name for Jerusalem) as the capital city of an Islamic Palestinian state. And therein lies the heart of the Middle East conflict as we see it today—the onslaught of the demonic spiritual powers of darkness against the declared purposes of God. Most nations of the world, particularly the European Union and the United Nations, are hell-bent on disinherit Israel of her historic capital city and her Biblical heartland of Judea and Samaria. Certainly, in a spiritual sense, we are seeing the fulfilment of *Zechariah 12: 2-3*: “Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will be cut in pieces ...” I believe we are seeing the spiritual fulfilment of this prophecy in the BDS movement of today.

Britain’s betrayal of the Mandate for Palestine in the 1930s and 40s laid the groundwork for this to happen.

San Remo 90

As mentioned in a previous article, it was the San Remo Conference of 1920 that paved the way for all of the Mandates awarded to Britain and France in the former Ottoman Empire. Britain has sought to cover up its comprehensive violation of the Mandate for Palestine resulting in the records of the San Remo Conference being buried for several decades. In 2010 the European Coalition for Israel organised a commemoration of the 90th anniversary of the San Remo Resolution on 24th and 25th April at the Villa Devachan in Sanremo. Villa Devachan is where the original conference took place just over a century ago. The gathering included some international lawyers and around 30 intercessors from different nations, including the UK. At the conference there was repentance for the nations—particularly Britain—for ‘breaking the covenant’ made there, and a new declaration was signed affirming the original San Remo Resolution.

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The Original ‘Gospel’ and the Jubilee

■ Enoch Lavender

Director | Olive Tree Ministries

When we hear the word ‘gospel’ today, we tend to think of the basic message of Christianity; namely, that mankind is separated from God through sin and that Jesus paid the penalty for our sin through His death, burial and resurrection. However, we will see that the word ‘gospel’ in the time of Jesus carried a significantly different meaning.

The Bible tells us that Jesus went about preaching ‘the gospel of the kingdom’ (*Matthew 4:23*). Yet we have no record of Jesus directly preaching to the crowds that He was going to die and rise again so that through faith in Him, we could come to God. Furthermore, Jesus even sent His disciples out to preach ‘the gospel’ (*Luke 9:6*). If Jesus’ disciples were preaching about His coming death, burial and resurrection, why then were they so confused and depressed after Jesus’ death?

I believe the answer to this question can be found by studying the ancient practice of the Jubilee and its role in Messianic prophecy.

The Jubilee System

Life in the ancient world was tough, and many lived as farmers who were completely dependent on the produce of their fields. Those finding themselves in severe financial hardship could temporarily sell their land and even themselves into slavery. The laws of the Jubilee then stipulated that a friend or relative could ‘redeem’ or buy back the land and set those who had become slaves free. However, if no redeemer was found, in the 50th year, God Himself would cancel the debts of the poor, He would set the slaves free, and He would restore them to their individually allotted inheritance.

Just imagine for a moment the dramatic nationwide joy of this once-in-a-generation occasion! Tears and shouts of joy would have erupted across Israel as debts were cancelled, as families embraced loved ones who had spent years

in slavery, and as people returned to their God-given farms and properties.

A National Bankruptcy

The nation of Israel itself soon became morally ‘bankrupt’. As a result, the land was invaded and conquered by foreign armies, and the entire population found themselves in slavery to foreign powers. The nation was powerless to set themselves free from this slavery, to return to their land or to ‘pay off’ their debt.

The people of Israel began to long for a redeemer, one who would restore them to freedom and to their God-given inheritance. In fact, to this day, Judaism speaks longingly of this national redemption and the Messianic age to come.

Sky High Expectation

At the time of Jesus’ birth, expectation of the coming redeemer was sky-high. Anna, the prophetess, excitedly spoke of Jesus to all those “who looked for redemption in Jerusalem” (*Luke 2:36*).

Then as Jesus started His ministry, His very first sermon was a reading from *Isaiah 61*. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me...” He began, “to preach good tidings to the poor... liberty to the captives... To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord... And they shall rebuild the old ruins...”

This prophecy of Isaiah speaks of the Messiah declaring the “acceptable year of the Lord”, or in other words, the Jubilee. No wonder all the people in the Synagogue were staring at Jesus after He spoke these words!

This Messianic Jubilee proclamation is ‘good news’ to the poor. Why? Because their debts are being cancelled. This Jubilee proclamation is ‘freedom to the captives’. Why? Because the bankrupt slaves had their debts cancelled and their freedom restored. They will ‘rebuild the old ruins’. Why? Because the people are returning to their own ancestral inheritance and beginning to restore the old properties and cities that had fallen



| Photo: Shutterstock

into disrepair. All this is truly ‘good news’! With this Messianic declaration, it is no wonder that people flocked to Jesus and that many wanted to crown Him King.

In these words from Isaiah, we also discover the answer to our earlier question about the ‘gospel’ (or good news) which Jesus preached. The gospel Jesus preached wasn’t a message of faith in Him for salvation from sins (all though this message is important). Instead, this gospel message was understood to mean that the ‘Jubilee restoration’ was at hand.

The Disappointment

The people’s hope of an imminent Jubilee came crashing down as Jesus breathed his final breath on the cross. His own disciples spoke of their disillusionment as they were hoping it ‘was he who was going to redeem Israel’ (*Luke 24:21*).

After His resurrection, Jesus spends the next 40 days with His disciples. The only question the disciples asked Jesus at this time reflects what was on their hearts. ‘Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’ (*Acts 1:6*). In other words, is the Jubilee going to happen now?

Fast forward to the day of Pentecost, and

we see this question of the Jubilee still lingering as Peter gets up to speak. Anointed by the Holy Spirit, Peter explains, “Jesus has to remain in heaven until the time comes for restoring everything, as God said long ago, when he spoke through the holy prophets” (*Acts 3:21*). In other words, what the prophets have said about the Jubilee, will take place. The restoration is coming, and it will be a Jubilee restoration of ‘everything’, coming to its fullness at the time of Jesus’ return.

In other words, the return of Jesus is something to look forward to with expectation, just like the Jubilee in ancient Israel. It will be a time of restoration, a time of freedom, a time of release for those in bondage and slavery, and a time when ancient inheritances will be restored. No wonder this is good news!

The joyful expectation of the Jubilee must have been what Jesus had in mind when He said, “When these (End Time prophecies)... begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.” (*Luke 21:28*)

To learn more, see our new 5 Part Bible study resource on the Jubilee available at www.olivetreeministries.org.au/eshop

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The official report from the gathering records:

We felt that Sunday (25th April) would be a day which we would dedicate to the Lord and His purposes for Israel. We read out His promises from the Word of God as we lifted up His name in worship.

The guest of honour to witness all of this was the then Deputy Speaker of the Knesset, Danny Danon. He later served as Israel’s Ambassador at the United Nations (2015 to 2020).

The Time for Repentance

Real repentance is not just a question of apologising to Israel for Britain’s betrayal of the Mandate, but re-aligning its foreign policy with the spirit and the letter of the treaty that was entered into 100 years ago. At the time the international community unanimously endorsed this treaty. Without this repentance the United Kingdom remains on a collision course with the God of Israel.

The Lord, speaking through the Prophet Joel, gave us a dire warning:

For behold, in those days, and at that time, when I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will enter into judgment with them there on account of My people, My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations. They have also divided up My Land. (*Joel 3:1-2*)

Isaiah chapter 60 is a passage of Scripture that relates to Israel in the latter days in which we are now living, and beyond. We see in this passage something of the dark days in which we are now living, but we also see the glory of the Lord arising upon Israel at such a time. We also see something of the return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel, and the wealth of the Gentiles being gathered to Israel. Although it is not directly mentioned, it also seems to reflect the glory of the Lord’s actual presence among His ancient people in Jerusalem—after His return. But there is also a dire warning in *verse 12*: “For the nation and kingdom which will not serve you shall perish, and those nations shall be utterly ruined.” Clearly there are many nations that fall into that category.

In the final months of his earthly life in 2003 the renowned Bible teacher, Derek Prince, carried a deep burden for the welfare of the United Kingdom, as many intercessors do today. He believed that *verse Isaiah 60:12* would be Britain’s fate if we are not prepared to repent before the Lord of our past actions, and once again to re-align ourselves with his purposes for Israel, as we were 100 years ago. The Lord’s ancient edict in *Genesis 12:3* will come to pass either way: “I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse those who curse you.”

Today, as the reborn State of Israel passes its 75th anniversary against all odds—humanly speaking—should we not be looking to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and worshipping Him for His faithfulness to His covenant promises?

Hugh Kitson is a documentary filmmaker who has made many films about Israel. His films about the British Mandate for Palestine include “The Forsaken Promise”—a three-part series (Hatikvah Film Trust 2006) and “Whose Land?” Part One presented by Colonel Richard Kemp (Title Deed Media 2017)—see www.whoseland.tv. Part Two is still in production.

This is the final article in a six-part series exploring the significance of the British Mandate for Palestine for today.

Celebrating Judea and Samaria

■ Sondra Oster Baras

Former Attorney | Bible Student | Director of CFOIC Heartland

Israel is 75 years old. For an individual, that is already an advanced age, a time when one can begin to look back and evaluate a life that began with great dreams and finds itself winding down after years of activity and accomplishments. For a nation, it is a small increment of time. And for the Nation of Israel, that dates its inception back 4,000 years to the time of our first forefather Abraham, or at the very least to the Exodus from Egypt, a few hundred years later, 75 years is the equivalent of minutes.

But it is still a good time to look back and reflect. When Israel was established, there were approximately 600,000 Jews living in the country. Within a short time, hundreds of thousands of refugees streamed into the country with nothing but the clothes on their backs—Holocaust survivors and Jews who had been expelled from their homes in Muslim countries. There was no housing, not enough food. Most of the refugees knew little or no Hebrew and came from a mixture of cultures and backgrounds. The parents struggled with the cultural differences, but the children all played soccer together on the dirt fields just outside their temporary homes. They were all struggling to survive, but they were thrilled to be part of building the Jewish State of Israel.

Jerusalem was a tiny backwater, a slum. There was no glorious main street with shops and hotels. No one wanted to visit Jerusalem because it wasn't the real Jerusalem. The Old City, hidden behind its stone walls, was occupied illegally by Jordan. Jordanian soldiers were stationed on the path leading to the Jaffa Gate, periodically taking potshots at the half-destroyed buildings of Mamilla, where refugees eked out a meager existence while dodging the bullets from Jordan. I remember visiting Jerusalem in 1973, after the Jordanians were already gone, and seeing the holes that the shelling had left in the walls of the crumbling Mamilla structure.

For 19 years, Israel celebrated its independence but lacked the confidence to look forward. Surrounded on all sides by hostile neighbors, no one knew what the future would bring. In May of 1967, just a few weeks before the Six Day War began, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, an elderly, pious rabbi, head of a small yeshiva in Jerusalem, addressed his students on Israel's 19th birthday. His cry rang out to



View of Karnei Shomron 2022.

them: "Where is our Hebron? Where is our Shechem?" It was a ringing cry that echoed what so many Jews had since forgotten, that while we finally had a state of our own, we did not have the heart of Biblical Israel. And of course, at that time, we didn't even have the Old City of Jerusalem.

Just a few weeks later, Jordan attacked Israel as part of the overall war against Israel in June of 1967, what became known as the Six Day War. Jerusalem was liberated as was all of Judea and Samaria. At that point, Rabbi Kook's students recalled his passionate words and understood that he had been prophetic in his cry.

Seventy five years after Israel was established, the country is doing better than anyone would ever have imagined in 1948. It has become a leader in technology, initiating advances in the world of computers, science and medicine. It boasts a strong economy and a vibrant society. More Bible is being studied in Israel than ever before in our history. We have the highest birth rate of any western country and there is more faith in our country today than when we were established.

But there is one issue that remains controversial—the very miracle of the Six Day War, the liberation of Judea and Samaria. Around the world, many are celebrating our

75th birthday and political leaders have sent warm greetings to Israel on our special day. But at the same time, these same political leaders condemn Israel's presence in Judea and Samaria. And when hundreds of thousands of Jews gathered in Jerusalem on Jerusalem Day, to celebrate the reunification of our capital city and to march in celebration throughout the city, those same leaders expressed disappointment that we were actually marching in our very own Old City of Jerusalem.

We have come a long way but there is still a distance to travel ahead of us. Today, more than 500,000 Jews live in Judea and Samaria and hundreds of thousands more live in the liberated areas of Jerusalem. We will never give up. We will never bend to mis-guided opinions on the world arena. King David urged us to ask God for the peace of Jerusalem (*Psalm 122:6*). Joel tells us that God will judge those who divide His land (*Joel 4:2*). We have reunited the land. We are settling the land. And you are helping us to do that. Thank you, dear Christian friends.

Sondra Oster Baras is the founder and director of CFOIC Heartland, representing the Jewish communities in Judea and Samaria to Christians all over the world. To support the work of CFOIC Heartland and help the truth get out, please use the form on the back page and select CFOIC (Christian Friends of Israeli Communities).

The Case of the Missing Anointing Oil

■ Enoch Lavender

Director | Olive Tree Ministries

Through His sacrificial death on the cross, Jesus has brought us salvation and granted those who believe eternal life. He is rightly called our Saviour, but from a Jewish perspective He cannot—yet—be fully called the Messiah.

The Anointed One

Messiah literally means 'the smeared one' or the 'anointed one'. As the anointing has become synonymous with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, many Christians already see Jesus as 'anointed'.

However, the Biblical term literally refers to being physically anointed with a unique anointing oil to take the throne of Israel. The recent coronation of King Charles III gave millions of viewers worldwide a once-in-a-lifetime viewing of this ancient practice. In full public sight, Charles was disrobed of his royal garments, leaving him dressed in rather plain white undergarments. Charles was then ushered to an area concealed by large decorative screens where he was anointed with oil uniquely chosen from the Mount of Olives.

Once the anointing was complete, Charles emerged to be

dressed in his spectacular golden royal robe. He was then crowned with his royal crown with the Archbishop of Canterbury declaring "God Save the King!"

The Missing Anointing Oil

For Jesus to fulfil His role as Messiah, He literally must return to earth and be crowned King over Israel—just as the Angel Gabriel foretold (*Luke 1:32*). There is a problem however. Israel's formula for anointing oil contains its own unique ingredients including persimmon oil. This oil was exceedingly rare in ancient times, with only two known groves in existence at the time of Jesus. Both of these groves were destroyed during the destruction of the Temple, leaving Israel without a means to anoint their Messiah as King—until now.¹

The Missing Anointing

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the Qumran caves not only provided priceless ancient scrolls of Biblical texts, but also a rather unusual Copper Scroll. It took researchers years of careful restoration work before they were finally able to unfurl the scroll and read its contents. The scroll effectively contained a treasure map of 64 treasures from Bible times. While it has been hard to match its

descriptions with Israel's current landscape, researchers nevertheless were able to use its contents to uncover a sealed clay jar in Cave 11 at Qumran. This jar contained a very unusual and sticky substance, with chemical analysis showed it to be composed of Moses' unique ingredients for anointing oil. The jar was carbon dated back to the days of Jesus, as published by the National Geographic.² According to Grant Jeffrey, this unusual jar is now in the safekeeping of the chief rabbis in Israel, and perhaps it will be the very substance used to anoint Jesus as the future King of Israel.

I believe Jesus is truly coming again, and when He comes, we can expect there to be a far greater and more magnificent crowning ceremony than the world has ever seen. On that day, He will be finally be declared as the Messiah of Israel and the King over all the Earth—may that day come soon!

References:

- 1 Jeffrey, Grant. R, *The New Temple and the Second Coming* (2007), page 50-51, 56-57
- 2 See *Special To The New York* (1989-02-16). "Balsam Oil of Israelite Kings Found in Cave Near Dead Sea". *The New York Times*. Also see Jones, Vendyl. *A Door of Hope: My Search for the Treasures of the Copper Scroll* (2005). *Lightcatcher Books*.

Join us in Defending Israel



■ Andrew Tucker

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

The Hague Initiative for International Cooperation (*thinc.*) is a global network of international law, academics, practitioners and experts in related disciplines (history, religion etc.).

thinc. was founded in 2017 in The Hague, with the assistance of Christians for Israel, as a non-profit under Dutch law. The *thinc.* network is managed by its Directors, assisted by Senior Fellows, Associates and an Advisory Board.

Our mission is to *challenge the misuse of international law to delegitimise the State of Israel and advocate fair and reasonable use of international law to promote peace and security between Israel and her neighbours.*

We are the only international law think tank on the European continent including a broad Christian outreach. Our focus is on rallying the Christian community to join with our Jewish brothers and sisters in our commitment to promote peace and security in the Middle East based on cooperation and mutual respect.

Lawfare has become the prime strategy of those who seek to abolish the Jewish State and Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem—the eternal, undivided capital of Israel. The State of Israel is under attack in the United Nations, European Union, World Health Organisation, and judicial institutions such as the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court. *The Hague Initiative for International Cooperation* has developed a proactive, sound and sensible response to that lawfare.

Our Strategy

We achieve our mission through education, research and advocacy:

- ***thinc.Education:*** Equips learners from all over the world through a variety of educational programmes that teach practical skills, theoretical frameworks and information relevant to current political and legal debates about Israel.
- ***thinc.Research:*** Our research explores international law, history, religion and politics and results in articles, blogs, reports and briefing papers that provide context, alternative views and fresh arguments concerning Israel's legal challenges.
- ***thinc.Advocacy:*** Provides analyses, briefings and submissions that speak directly to international organisations, national governments and NGOs. We engage with networks of politicians, academics, lawyers and concerned individuals, while building communities of shared expertise and mutual support.

Why *thinc.* can make a Difference

- Comprehensive, convincing legal and historical rebuttal to the anti-Israel narrative.
- Close ties in the Christian Zionist world across the globe: Europe, Asia, Americas, and Oceania/Pacific.
- Active partnerships with global and national organisations having networks in legal, political and religious circles (e.g. UK Lawyers for Israel, UN Watch, NGO Monitor, International Legal Forum, Christians for Israel, and the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ)).
- European based; seated in The Hague, the capital of international law, and a European network including i.a. the Israel Allies Foundation and the European Leadership Network (ELNET).
- Multidisciplinary approaches to projects to ensure the use of international law in context.
- Leveraging a global network with a small management team of committed professionals.



Notes in the Western Wall in Jerusalem, Israel. | Photo: Shutterstock

Some Key Achievements in Just Six Years

- 2017—Inaugural seminar in the Peace Palace resulting in the Statement of Jurists on the Israel-Palestine Conflict (available in 7 languages, German and Hebrew in progress).
- 2018—Publication of the textbook *Israel on Trial*.
- 2019—Inaugural *thinc.* Summer School in Israel.
- 2020—Submission to the International Criminal Court (ICC) on the *Situation in Palestine*.
- In 2023 so far, we have convened a major educational conference on the theme *Israel on Trial*, published a 300 pp research book titled *Two States for Two Peoples: the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict, International Law and European Union Policy*, and engaged in the process of assisting states to make *amicus* submissions to the International Court of Justice.

Our Priorities for 2023—2024

Our main goals over the next two years:

- ***Influence*** European policy—prepare and present policy papers and organise workshops for decision-makers in European and other capital cities in collaboration with partners like Christians for Israel, ICEJ, ELNET and the Israel Allies Foundation.
- ***Advocate*** against the misuse of international law—through submissions and reports in tribunals and councils (ICJ, ICC, UNHRC, etc.).
- ***Train*** the next generation of leaders—Christian and Jewish—in key countries through educational programmes and projects, to stand against the delegitimation of Israel.

Immediate Challenges in 2023

We are currently working on several high-priority projects:

- The UN General Assembly has requested the International Court of Justice to issue an Advisory Opinion concerning the legal consequences of Israel's 'prolonged occupation.' This is very threatening for Israel. We have launched a counter-initiative to mobilise UN member states to make submissions to the Court against the requested advice by 25 July 2023.
- Establishing educational hubs in Europe (The Hague), Asia/Pacific (Singapore) and USA. These hubs will offer programmes for high-potential young leaders to train them to argue the legal case for Israel in their region including summer schools, webinars, a mentoring salon, and pilot projects.
- Disseminate our EU two-state Policy critique, *Two States for Two Peoples?* via workshops and seminars in European capitals.
- Challenging EU labelling laws that stigmatise products from outside the Green Line as illegal.
- Establishing a presence in the United States with a 501(c)(3) non-profit named *thinc.* America.



Professor Avi Bell speaking at the *Israel on Trial* conference in March 2023

Join the Fight!

The need is great, and our ambitions are high. We invite you to join us in our fight against the anti-Israel lawfare. In fact, we offer you the opportunity to become an Angel Investor or Sentinel of Jerusalem at the level of your choice!

Angel Investor—Investing, impacting and safeguarding the work of *thinc.*

- Friend—\$0-249
- Sponsor—\$250-499
- Advocate—\$500-999
- Founder—\$1,000-4,999

The Sentinels of Jerusalem—Guarding the gates of Jerusalem to protect Israel.

- Benefactor—\$5,000-9,999
- Champion—\$10,000-24,999
- Visionary—\$25,000 and above

More information, and to make a donation directly to *thinc.*: www.thinc-israel.org

Believing Without Israel

Jews and Judaism are Bad—Part 5

■ Rev Cornelis Kant
Executive Director | Christians for Israel International

In this series of articles Rev Cornelis Kant explains how it happened that the role of Israel was seen as insignificant in the development of our Christian faith and in the history of Christian theology.

During the Middle Ages, the perception strengthened that the Jews were cursed and that only conversion to Jesus and joining the Christian church would save them. In addition, the popular opinion developed that Judaism was a corrupted religion. The Jew should not only convert but also renounce his Jewishness and stop his Jewish life. In addition, Jews were increasingly seen as inferior and dangerous. In the minds and hearts of many Christians, not only did an incorrect Biblical-theological view of the Jews take root, but also a negative image of Jews as human beings. Churches and governments often instituted measures to restrict the freedom of Jews. Regular outbursts of looting, violence and murder of Jews also took place.

Statements about Jews

Numerous caricature images of Jews emerged during this time, including accompanying cartoons. Jews were often blamed for economic crises and epidemics. If Jews were rich, they were referred to as greedy scavengers, and if they were poor, as ‘schmucks’. It became common to speak in negative and crude terms about Jews and their Jewish religion. Well-known are the statements of Martin Luther (1483-1546) in his later writings on Jews. He called for burning synagogues and expelling Jews from

secularisation and enlightenment emerged, in which the accusation of the murder of Jesus was no longer relevant to modern man. The deeper aversion to Jews, however, persisted. And so, a new form of antisemitism developed, which was not religiously based, but on a racial doctrine. Jews were seen as an inferior race that posed a threat to the healthy Germanic race. Many Christians also proved to be sensitive to this racial doctrine. The German reverend Adolf Stöcker (1835-1909), court chaplain at the Kaisers’ court, said in a sermon: “The Jews, they are the poisoners (...) strengthening the Christian-Germanic spirit is the remedy to carve out the tumour of Judaism in Germanic life, to put an end to this pernicious cancer”. Thus, the old anti-Judaism shifted to antisemitism.

In the 1930s and 1940s, Prof Gerhard Kittel was a Professor of New Testament in Germany. His Theological Dictionary of the New Testament has become known worldwide and used by numerous theologians and



Anti-Jewish cartoon.

Churches and governments often started to take measures that restricted the freedom of Jews. Regular outbursts of looting, violence and murder of Jews also took place.

Germany. The well-known humanist and scholar Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536) called Judaism a “pernicious plague” and a “danger to the church of Christ”. According to him, Jews are “arrogant, unruly, corrupt and utterly blind”. He even wrote to Strasbourg’s Wolfgang Capito in a letter: “There is nothing more dangerous to the teaching of Christ than this most pernicious plague, Judaism”.

Anti-Jewish Racial Doctrines

In the 19th century, all restrictive measures against the Jews were lifted. Jews became equal citizens with equal rights in Europe. At the same time, a process of

pastors. He is considered the most prominent New Testament scholar of the twentieth century. He wrote a book entitled Die Judenfrage (The Jewish Question) in 1936, in which he said: “The struggle against Judaism must be given a Christian sense. This struggle is a conscious and clear Christian cause”. Kittel calls the New Testament “the most anti-Jewish book in the whole world”. He is obviously a passionate anti-Semite. He believes there is no place for Jews in Germany since the rise of Christianity.

Shocking

It is shocking to see how prominent scholars have turned against Jews and Judaism. They proved that, despite their

academic training and Bible knowledge, they had no real understanding of God’s plan of salvation for Israel and for the world. Apparently, a person can be so stuck in rigid, dogmatic frameworks and feelings of aversion, that there is no place for what the Bible really says about Israel. We find such statements unacceptable in our time and call them antisemitic. We know where this all ended: the Holocaust, in which six million Jews were murdered. But before World War II, antisemitic feelings and statements were commonplace also among Christians. The term ‘antisemitism’ was first used only in the 19th century, but the phenomenon itself is, therefore, centuries old. It is obvious how deeply both replacement theology and aversion to Jews and Judaism are rooted in Christian theology and human thinking and feeling.



Prof Gerhard Kittel.

Signs of Faith
By Kees de Vreugd

Zecher Lechurban

In this series, ‘Signs of Faith’, objects, procedures and concepts that express Jewish faith are explained and discussed.

Zecher lechurban means ‘remembrance of the destruction’ of the temple. *Tisha B’Av*, the 9th of the month of Av (this year it falls on July 27), is the day when the destruction of both the first and second temples is commemorated by fasting and reading the *Book of Lamentations*. The Romans set fire to the temple in 70 AD on the same day Nebuchadnezzar’s troops had done in 586 BC. These were the most traumatic events in Jewish history. But disasters that befell the Jews later also fell on that day, for example, the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492. *Tisha B’Av* has therefore become a symbol for all the calamities that befell the Jewish people in their history.

Tisha B’Av is one day. But the destruction of the temple—and the longing for its rebuilding—is so defining of the Jewish experience that its

commemoration is shaped in all sorts of moments and ways. One notable custom, for example, called *zecher lechurban*, is to leave a piece of wall in your house one cubit by one cubit bare, i.e. not wallpapered or painted. You see it in every Jewish house where people live according to Judaism, usually in the living room. Another custom is that when going out, a woman will never wear all her jewellery at once but will always leave at least one item at home. Another, is to leave the dining table not fully set.

For a very long time, it was also a custom not to make music except only for joyous life events like a wedding. I also read that there was a custom for a groom to put ashes on his head under the *chupa* instead of putting on the *tefilen* (prayer belts). These are all customs dating back to the time of the *Talmud* (roughly to the end of the 5th century). In later times, for example, the custom arose of the groom smashing a glass as *zecher lechurban* after the wedding ceremony.

Joy cannot be complete until Jerusalem and the temple are rebuilt.



Breaking the glass at a Jewish wedding. | Photo: Shutterstock

Recommended Reading

The Land of Hope & Fear—Israel's Battle for its Inner Soul

By Isabel Kershner

In *The Land of Hope and Fear*, veteran *New York Times* correspondent Isabel Kershner crisscrosses 'a country on the precipice' and comes away with 'great faith in the people'.

Over the past few months, as tensions and disagreements over the government's judicial overhaul plan have wracked the nation, many have opined that the country is more divided than ever before. But a new book from Isabel Kershner suggests that such a fissure was a very long time coming—and has its roots in divisions that date back to pre-state Israel.

"It feels like this judicial overhaul plan came out of nowhere three months ago – but actually, if you look at the divisions and the increasingly competing worldviews of the different tribes living here, I guess you could have seen it coming," Kershner told the *Times of Israel* during a recent interview in Jerusalem. "There are long processes that have been going on here – fundamental changes, generational changes, demographic changes, our politics have changed," she added. "So I guess you could have seen something like this coming... in terms of the general trends in society, what's happening now definitely has roots."

Over 400 pages, Kershner delves into the religious, political, racial and ideological divides that have plagued Israel since before its founding and in many ways, only sharpened as time went on.

"This is a portrait of a country on the precipice, battling for its inner soul," she writes in the book's introduction.

As the country approached its 75th anniversary, "the looming challenges instilled fear in those who dared look over the precipice," Kershner wrote. "A demographic trajectory pointing to a population more ambivalent and conflicted about Zionism and less equipped to contribute to a robust and modern economy; a potential nuclear arms race in the region, and a people's army fighting to preserve its popular legitimacy; the rise of the political fringes and the threats to liberal democracy."

After months of Israelis taking to the streets in mass protests, Kershner said she has seen both fear and hope—but few who are raising their hands in defeat.

"One thing we're seeing in this very current crisis—which is extremely acute and has brought to the surface a lot of these old resentments—we're seeing this incredible energy and dynamism, the fact that people care so much, there's no apathy here," Kershner said.

"There's definitely a sense of 'this is our country, and we're going to fight for it,' wherever you turn," she added. "And I think that's a source of hope and inspiration that you don't find in every place."

God's Sovereignty



Jesus had already said, in *John 10:16*: "I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice." | Photo: Shutterstock

■ Johannes Gerloff

Theologian, Journalist, Lecturer & Author

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

In this article, we continue to examine Paul's exposition about God's sovereignty in *Romans 9:6-33*.

Paul expounds in five steps what makes Abraham's descendants 'children' and the foundation on which this is established. In summary, it could be said that physical descent from Abraham is no 'guarantee of salvation'. In order to become Abraham's heir, one needs more than an appropriate genealogical tree.

predestined by Him anyway?

It is wrath, the (destructive) manifestation of His power, which God wanted to show in the vessels of wrath. The Apostle, however, emphasises God's 'longsuffering' towards the vessels of wrath as His distinct characteristic.

The Election of the Gentiles

Jesus had already said, in *John 10:16*: "I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice." God can even add Gentiles to the elected, even if this means that he makes 'My people' out of those who were originally 'not My people' (compare *1 Peter 2:9-10*), 'loved ones' of those who were

Creator's absolute sovereignty in election.

The Preference of the Gentiles

The King James Version says that Israel "hath not attained to the law of righteousness"—in contrast to the Gentiles who have attained to "the righteousness which is of faith". Many have falsely concluded from this passage that the Gentiles were justified instead of Israel in order to replace Israel, and are now the 'new' chosen people of God. But this is not what our text says.

The Greek word *'phthanein'* does indeed have the meaning 'to reach', 'to achieve to something', 'to attain', but it also includes the sense of 'to come first', 'to arrive

If God does whatever He wills in any case, is that not justification enough for a fatalistic worldview? Whom can He hold accountable then? What human being could ever resist God's will if everything is predestined by Him anyway?

In the previous article, we looked at God's dealing with Isaac and Ishmael and Jacob and Esau. In this article, we will consider three other ways in which Jews and non-Jews become children of God.

The Meaning of Pharaoh's Existence

God, in his freedom and sovereignty, is not only able to elect in order to show his mercy, and loving kindness, but he can also harden a person's heart. When he wills, he can raise up a Pharaoh and put him on the stage of history for the sole purpose of revealing himself as the Almighty and making this known to all the nations of the world. In order to execute His plan of salvation with mankind, for the sole purpose of glorifying His name, God is able to harden a human being, as He did with Pharaoh.

Again, the Apostle addresses the logical objection any listener or reader must surely come up with: If God does whatever He wills in any case, is that not justification enough for a fatalistic worldview? Whom can He hold accountable then? What human being could ever resist God's will if everything is

'not loved' and 'children of the living God' of those who were far off.

God is able to call non-Jews 'My people', even if this means that only a remnant of Israel will be saved. For in the end, it is neither the well-being nor the salvation of man that is decisive, but the holiness, glory and honour of the living God. The decisive measure is not 'human rights' but 'God's right'. Neither human feelings nor experiences, neither opinions nor considerations of men decide the final outcome, but rather, the Lord will completely fulfil his word upon the earth.

Paul's emphasising that God in his sovereign power calls "not Jews only, but also Gentiles", is nothing new to Judaism nor in the Hebrew Bible. Already during the exodus from Egypt, 'a mixed multitude' went up with the chosen people (*Exodus 12:38*) and many non-Israelites were among David's mighty men. From the very beginning, Israel's Torah was also intended 'for the stranger who sojourns among you' (*Exodus 12:49*). For law-abiding Judaism, The 'rock of offence' appears in the last verses of this chapter, where Paul illustrates the

earlier', 'to be ahead of' or 'to surprise'. Paul uses this word, for example, in *1 Thessalonians 4:15*. There he explains "that we, the living, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede (me *phthasomen*) the sleeping."

According to the original Greek wording, *Romans 9:31* should be translated as: "Even though Israel [in contrast to the Gentiles who did not care at all] pursued the law of righteousness, it did not [as should have been expected] attain it first."

Why [not]? Because they were not [motivated] by faith but by their own efforts. They have stumbled over the stone of offence. As it is written, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of offence, a rock of stumbling. Whoever trusts in him will not be put to shame." (*Romans 9:32-33*)

The God of Israel is, and always will be, God—fundamentally independent of all human legal claims or desires to hold Him accountable.

The Royal City

The History of Jerusalem—Part 3



In the City of David, archaeological site revealed birth place of Jerusalem on Ophel Hill near the Western Wall. | Photos: Shutterstock



Kameel Majdali
Director | Teach All Nations Inc.

Its transformation was breathtaking. From an obscure heathen Jebusite walled village perched on Ophel Hill, it became the capital of the United Kingdom of Israel. The arrival of the ark of the covenant, symbolising the throne and presence of Almighty God, made it a

holy city. And God's promise to give David a son and heir, who would rule from his throne forever made it the city of the great king. To seal its special nature, God Himself said that the city was the place where His name would dwell (*1 Kings 11:36; 2 Kings 21:4; 7; 2 Chronicles 6:6; 33:4; 7; Revelation 3:12*).

This is Jerusalem, the city of David and the city of God. It was already a thousand years old when David took control of it. Now that his kingdom was established, Jerusalem became the royal city. In this article, we will see how the sons of David fared while ruling and reigning from there.

Temple of Solomon (963 BC)

As a worshipper of God, David had a passionate desire to build a house in Jerusalem for Him. After all, David lived in a king's palace, while God's earthly abode was a glorified tent called the Tabernacle. God declined David's offer because he had shed too much blood as a warrior king. Yet, at that point, God made the famous Davidic covenant of *2 Samuel 7* and *1 Chronicles 17*, promising the coming son of David, King-Messiah.

The job of building the temple was left to David's successor and son, Solomon (Hebrew: *Shlomo*), whose name means 'peace.' Solomon commenced building the temple according to the plans and material resources left by his father, David. No expense was spared; it had to be exceedingly magnificent. Some estimate that it would have cost billions of dollars in today's currency. The dedication of the temple in *1 Kings 8* was one of the pinnacles of Israel's Old Testament history. Now God had a stable local earthly address, Israel had a meeting place for the three pilgrimage feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles; and the Gentiles had a house of prayer for all nations (*Isaiah 56:7; Matthew 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46*).

An Avoidable Split

Solomon's love of many strange foreign women, who worshipped false gods (*1 Kings 11:1-2*), caused him to fall out of favour with God. As a result, the union between Judah and the northern ten tribes was about to rupture.

Rehoboam as Solomon's successor, seriously lacked his father's wisdom. He was the 'son' addressed in the *Book of Proverbs (3:1)* who rejected wisdom's invitation. He and Jerusalem suffered as a result.

The battle lines were drawn: King Rehoboam, the grandson of David, ruling from his throne in Jerusalem, was confronted by Jeroboam, son of Nebat, who represented the ten tribes of the north. "Lighten our burden that Solomon your father put on us," said Jeroboam, 'and we will serve you' (*1 Kings 12:4*). Solomon's advisors urged Rehoboam to agree to their reasonable demand. However, he foolishly rejected their advice and listened to his mates who told him to "add to their yoke" and "whip them with scorpions." It was the height of arrogance and folly and cost the king the bulk of his kingdom.

The ten tribes from the north, led by Jeroboam, separated from the kingdom of David. All Rehoboam was left with was Judah, Jerusalem and the holy temple. Jeroboam and the northern tribes became known as 'Israel', and Rehoboam and the house of David became the kingdom of Judah.

Give us a King

God's plan from Day One was His Kingdom, and it still is. God's Kingdom and His forever king are His first priority. Everything else flows from that. Yet, the free will that God gave us has resulted in some terrible decisions and outcomes. The first couple, Adam and Eve, rejected God's rule. Their disobedience introduced sin and death into the world. Centuries later, the people of Israel rejected God as king by demanding that the prophet Samuel give them a human king. Why? So they could be like all the other (godless) nations of the earth (*1 Samuel 8:20*). Samuel warned them that a human king, even an Israelite one, would use and abuse them, all pain and no gain. Unmoved by this grim prospect, Israel still clamoured for a king. They ended up with Saul, and he was a disaster.

After the division of the house of David into Israel and Judah, there was a succession of kings on both sides. Many were bad (they did what was evil in the sight of the Lord), and some were catastrophic. Out of thirty-nine monarchs in Israel and Judah, only eight were good, all from Judah. Some of the notable good ones were Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah, yet even they made their foolish mistakes; Josiah's cost him his life.

Jerusalem witnessed all this and more. The lesson: even the best of earthly kings is no match for the King of kings and Lord of lords. Centuries later, that perfect king did come to Jerusalem, and it responded by hanging Him on a tree. He rose from the dead and is coming back, but not before they say, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" *Matthew 23:39*.

Biblical Roots

By David Nekrutman

A Post-Redemptive Season Afterthought

Since the beginning of March, the Jewish calendar has been full of redemptive celebrations. We began with *Purim (Book of Esther)* and culminated with *Shavuot*, the festival that marks the moment when the Heavenly *Torah* was brought to earth at Sinai (*Exodus 20*). In between these holidays, we remembered the *Exodus* from Egypt—*Pesach (Passover)* as well as marking two significant moments in modern-day sacred history, Israel's Independence Day and Jerusalem Day.

One of the key lessons we can take away from this redemptive season is that God intervenes in human history to save His elected people from near physical annihilation while at the same time moving redemptive history closer to its apex. We are a generation living in a privileged season where we can directly demonstrate God's existence and His hand in history—a reborn Israel with Jerusalem as its capital.

Our prophets envisioned the ingathering of Jewish exiles from the four corners of the world returning home and a remnant within the nations playing a part within these prophecies. It is truly easier to be a believer in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob because there is a State of Israel with Jerusalem as its capital rather than a follower of the false ideologies of Richard Dawkins. No one can rationally explain the continued existence of the Jewish people and their return to Israel after 2,000 years of exile, along with an active remnant of the Christian world standing side by side with us. It is God and God alone!

Biblically speaking, there is a Hebrew phrase that constantly stands in the shadows of God acting in history—*Ehyeh asher ehyeh (Exodus 3:14)*. Most translators translate this phrase as 'I am who I am' or 'I am that I am'. These translations take their cue from the *Vulgate* (I am who am) or the *Septuagint* (I am He who exists) and assume that the entire three-word phrase is God's name, and it is a self-definition of who He is: self-existent, with no dependence upon any other.

Delving into the intricacies of Hebrew grammar for *ehyeh* is beyond the scope of this article. It is safe to say that *ehyeh* can be translated in the present or future tense. Therefore, it is possible to translate the first *ehyeh* in *Exodus 3:14* as God's name 'I will be' and the phrase *asher ehyeh* as His commitment to Israel, 'What I will be'.

This Hebrew phrase becomes a game changer. Not only does it create the idea of hope in the world by taking an entire nation from slavery to freedom in broad daylight, but it also means others witnessing this moment will need to decide to choose Him or not. At the time of the *Exodus* a 'mixed multitude' (*Exodus 12:38*) decided to anchor their destiny with God and walked out of Egypt in broad daylight alongside the biological descendants of Jacob.

The *Ehyeh asher ehyeh* phrase is more important than ever before. When *Ehyeh asher ehyeh* was first articulated by God, the *Exodus* was not yet manifested in the world. However, we are living in a time where *Ehyeh asher ehyeh* is in fulfilment, but the world is saturated in fleeting pagan values and brokenness. This has caused a veil for nations to see the miracle in front of them that true hope is in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Both Jews and Christians need to work together to help others to become the modern-day 'mixed multitude'.

David Nekrutman is an Orthodox Jewish theologian involved in the sacred calling of Jewish-Christian relations for over two decades and currently serves as the Israel Director for The Isaiah Projects. In 2018, Mr Nekrutman received his master's in biblical literature from Oral Roberts University.

9th of Av

Mourning the Destruction of the Temple

■ Kees de Vreugd

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

In the second half of the first century, the Jews in the land of Israel rebelled against Roman rule. But Roman supremacy was great. Eventually, the Jewish insurgents entrenched themselves in Jerusalem, which was besieged by the Romans for three years. The term Jewish revolt suggests a certain unity, but nothing was further from the truth. Even in besieged Jerusalem, different Jewish factions also fought each other to the death. The city was finally taken by Roman general Titus, who would later become emperor.

Fire

Although Titus seems to have initially ordered that the temple be left unharmed, a fire did start in the temple, probably caused by a Roman legionnaire—whether it was deliberate is not clear. In no time, the temple was on fire. It happened on the afternoon of 9 Av, in the middle of summer. Throughout the next day, the temple continued to burn until it was completely destroyed. Other disastrous events in Jewish history are also associated with 9 Av, such as the destruction of the first temple in 586 BC and the decisive defeat in the second Jewish revolt in 135. Moreover, according to the *Mishna* (Jewish oral teaching), Emperor Hadrian had the temple square ploughed up (Jeremiah and Lamentations). In 1942, the deportation to Treblinka of Jews from the Warsaw ghetto also began on 9 Av.

Exile

Although more Jews had lived outside than in Israel for centuries, the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 nevertheless marked in Jewish consciousness the beginning of a new exile, or a new phase of exile, namely, the Roman exile. Moreover, the temple had been the central religious institution of Judaism to which all Jewish life was oriented. Now that there was no more temple, Judaism had to reinvent itself, so to speak. The only groups that already had the infrastructure for this were the Pharisees and the Jewish Christians. The *Talmud* relates that when the fall of Jerusalem seemed

inevitable, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai, the leading Pharisee, had himself smuggled out of the besieged city in a coffin. Roman soldiers brought him to Titus. Rabbi Yochanan prophesied to him that he (Titus) would become emperor, which happened a short time later. In gratitude, he complied with Yochanan's request: "Give me Yavne and its students." The study house in Yavne (also called Yamnia) became the new centre where, from the traditions of the Pharisees, rabbinic Judaism was further developed. This Judaism would become normative for Israel in the centuries to come and until today—as Jesus had also announced in *Matthew 23:2-3*: "The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; therefore, all that they tell you, do and observe."

Several attempts to rebuild the temple came later, but they all came to nothing. The last was in 365 AD under emperor Julian the Apostate. He had allowed the Jews to do so, while his immediate predecessors had begun to Christianise Jerusalem by building all kinds of churches. Unfortunately, a natural underground gas explosion soon put an end to the work that had only just begun. Under later Christian emperors, Jews were admitted to the Temple Mount only for 9 Av, the day of mourning for the destruction of the temple, where a church now stood.

Observance

9 Av, in Hebrew *Tisha be-Av*, is a complete day of fasting. That means no eating or drinking from sunset to sunset, no washing, no wearing leather shoes and no sexual intercourse. No *Torah* is even taught. It is a day of mourning—one sits on the ground or on low benches. During the morning service, the *tallit* (prayer shawl) is not worn. One does not do that again until the afternoon.



Destruction of holy Jewish temple in ancient history, Tish B'Av. | Photo: Shutterstock

The Book of Lamentations is read on this day. It poignantly sings of the downfall of the city and the first temple:

How lonely sits the city
that was full of people!
She has become like a widow
Who was once great among the nations!
She who was a princess among the provinces
Has become a forced labourer!

The mourning period actually begins three weeks earlier, on 17 *Tammuz*, the day a breach was made in the city wall and does not end until 10 Av in the afternoon. The prophets' readings of the three *Sabbaths* between 17 *Tammuz* and 9 Av announce the judgement of Israel's sin and idolatry. This is how it was at the time of the first temple. The real reason for the fall of the second temple, according to Jewish tradition, was the people's internal divisions, selfishness and hatred of the people's fellow man. But after 9 Av, then, words of consolation may sound: "Comfort, comfort My people". These words from *Isaiah 40* herald four *Sabbaths* of consolation.

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Israel, the Best Medicine for a Jew

■ Shraga Evers

My name is Shraga Evers. I have been happily married to Eden van Dijk for almost 14 years. We are blessed with five children. We both grew up in Amsterdam (the Netherlands). At 14, I actually already knew Eden was the right choice for me, but she did not yet know that. It took a few more years to convince her.

In 2008, I asked her to marry me at a vantage point on the Western Wall in Jerusalem. Eden had to return to the Netherlands for her studies, and I had just finished my service in the IDF. We promised each other that we would stay together in the Netherlands for the time being but make *Aliyah* permanently as soon as we could. In 2009, we got married on the roof of Yeshivat Hakotel, the *Torah* school where I studied religious studies after high school and before my IDF time. On 26 March 2012, on our daughter's first birthday, *"Ta'ir Bat-Zion"* (a new Light will shine over Zion), we made *Aliyah*, first to Jerusalem, then to Efrat. Jews and non-Jews alike sometimes ask us why we made *Aliyah* and what it is like to live in Israel and Judea. There is no single answer to that.

I grew up with Oma Bloeme, who, as an Auschwitz survivor, kept telling us that the Netherlands was not our home, but Israel. She had also tried to make *Aliyah* in 1945 when she returned from the camps but had to postpone it temporarily. Meanwhile, she met Grandpa Hans, who was a 'salon Zionist' and thought *Aliyah* was a nice idea, in theory. She eventually made *Aliyah* two weeks before she died.

Eden grew up with Saba Mordechai, who managed to escape from a camp in France and eventually reached the Land of Israel 'illegally' in 1944. After working hard to establish Kibbutz Neve Ilan and fighting in three wars, his wife (Safta Miriam), who was visiting relatives in Brussels, did not want to go back. She couldn't take another war. The family moved to Germany because they could not manage financially elsewhere. Saba Mordechai hated every day in Germany and longed to return to Jerusalem. Only after his retirement did he succeed.

Eden also grew up with Grandfather Lion and Grandmother Betty, ardent Zionists. They had even applied for an *Aliyah* visa from The Jewish Agency before World War II but never heard anything. On the first day of *Passover* in 1942, they had to report with their baby for transport to one of the camps. Like many Dutch Jews, they obeyed and sat down to the *Seder* meal with their suitcases packed for the next day. During the *Seder*, there was a knock on the door; there was a telegram from The Jewish Agency in Switzerland; they had received a visa to emigrate! They saw this as a sign from above. Lion went to the Gestapo the next day to ask for a postponement, saying they were going to emigrate to Palestine. The Nazi on duty apparently found it amusing and gave them permission, after which they went into hiding and survived the war. They



Shraga Evers with his wife and children.

ended up making *Aliyah* only after retirement.

It is important that your ideals are fuelled by constructive motives; the Holocaust and persecution of Jews are not. Yet, it is one of the main reasons why we, and many other Jews, consider or make *Aliyah*. In Jewish Holland, it felt a bit like living in a monument. The commemorations were often crowded, the memorial sites large, but the synagogues empty. Of course, that was partly because of the Holocaust, but also certainly because of assimilation. The assimilation is a result of the fact that Judaism is not a good alternative in the Diaspora. Many other ways of life are more interesting. If you want to integrate well into Western society, you are very likely to have your identity slowly diluted. In any case, we knew we were not going to wait until retirement but actively wanted to make *Aliyah*.

Even non-religious life in Israel is Jewish, from the songs and stories at the nursery to the atmosphere on the streets and holidays.

Life in Israel is a dream. It is the Land of the Future, where the focus is forward, on the future and not forgetting where we came from. The Holocaust does exist in the background, but we are building and developing the land, perhaps the best therapy after two thousand years of persecution of Jews. It is also the natural habitat for us as Jews, and, as a (religious) Jew, you notice that in everything. If it's *Passover*, it's spring. When it's *Toe Bishwat*, the trees are in bloom. On *Sukkot*, it is autumn, and on Yom Kippur, everything is at a standstill. Bible stories play out around you, and the language you speak is modern and old at the same time. Actually, everything is brand new and ancient at the same time. It tells the story of our people, the experience of now and also the future. Even the obsession of the EU, America, Arab countries and the rest of the world with tiny Israel is nothing new; just look at the Bible's *Book of Nehemiah*.

The most important thing about Israel, though, is that your Jewish identity is allowed to be part of everything and can

also be present in public life. You can be a doctor, pilot, rubbish collector or teacher while expressing your Jewish identity. You are not only Jewish in your private time, but always. This is much more natural and perhaps Israel's greatest blessing for Jews. Even non-religious life in Israel is Jewish, from the songs and stories at the nursery to the atmosphere on the streets and holidays. Everything revolves around Judaism, holidays, traditions and lore.

In this time of political discord, I think it is important to emphasise that in Israel, people love, help and care for each other. Just like in a big family, there is also disagreement, but when it comes down to it, people are together. The Dee family also lives in our neighbourhood. On the second day of *Passover*, mother Lucy and her daughters Maya and Rina were killed in a cowardly Palestinian attack. First, we attended Maya and Rina's funeral and,

two days later, Lucy's, who eventually succumbed to her injuries. The response from the community and from father and husband Leo Dee was impressive. The support, love and call to do good for each other and unite were overwhelmingly reciprocated. For me, Leo's call to trust in God and the Jewish people, hang out the Israeli flag and practice charity underscored the aforementioned point. It is precisely (or even) during extreme suffering that one looks to the future. What is important for the country and the people now? We are together, and together we get through the difficulties.

Shraga Evers is the founder of the Shivat Zion organisation. Shivat Zion means 'Return to Zion' and is mentioned in Psalm 126, "When the Lord brought back those that returned to Zion." The period of Ezra and Nehemiah is also called 'Shivat Zion' in Jewish history. Shivat Zion aims to advance Aliyah and help new immigrants from Western Europe and Latin America in every step of their Aliyah and integrate into Israeli society. The Olim are helped in English, German, Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch and the people helping them are Olim themselves. Shivat Zion was founded because, unlike American, French and South African Olim, no professional frameworks were present for Olim from Latin American and Western European countries.

Short News

Druze Have Increased Tenfold Since Establishment of Israel



The Central Bureau of Statistics released data on the Druze community living in Israel. According to the data, at the end of 2022 the number of Druze in Israel was 150,000, ten times higher than at the founding of the state! At the same time, their growth rate is currently below that of the Muslim and Jewish populations, but above that of the Christian Arab population. 98% of Druze in Israel live in 19 villages, 17 of which are in the Northern District and two localities (Daliat el Karmel and Isfiya) in the Haifa District. The three localities with the largest number of Druze in 2021 were: Daliat al-Karmel, Yarka and Magar.

How Israeli Start-Ups Protect the Environment

Many Israeli companies are committed to introducing innovative technologies aimed at optimising the use of resources in agriculture. The desire to use solar radiation as an environmentally friendly source of energy is therefore at the heart of the mission of Agri-Light, a start-up that improves agricultural yields and prevents the destruction of agricultural land. In doing so, the solar panels developed by Agri-Light serve a dual purpose: they generate solar energy while improving growing conditions for individual crops, for example, by shading cultivated land. This reduces carbon emissions and increases agricultural productivity.

Microsoft Promotes Israeli Agri-Food Start-ups Worldwide

Microsoft is working with Israeli startups developing pesticide and irrigation technology to ease food shortages globally. The tech giant will connect them to its vast network of contacts to help them find new markets and collaborations. Over 40 Israeli start-ups were earmarked for collaboration, with the first two—Projini and Saturas—are already working with Microsoft. Projini develops herbicides with AI technologies traditionally used in the pharma industry, and Saturas has developed a sensor that is embedded in the trunks of trees, vines, and plants to determine crop water status. The partnership programme is led by Start-Up Nation Central (SNC), a nonprofit that promotes Israeli innovators to help solve global challenges.



Israel, the Land of Absolute Miracles

Joanne Nihom

There are talented people everywhere in the world. Israeli culture, however, ensures that its people are willing to take risks and go to extremes. How that came about? Perhaps because of the Jewish mother, or the Jewish father. Or because of the waves of immigration or the fact that Jews everywhere had to keep starting over. Every generation has its successes. Around 1900 it was the *kibbutzim*; in 1948, the creation of the State of Israel, and now there is the start-up explosion.

The country changed from a barren desert to a green, healthy country in 75 years. This is mainly thanks to the Jewish National Fund (JNF). Forest planting, water management, innovation and research in agriculture has not only changed Israel, but also this knowledge is shared with the rest of the world. The numbers don't lie. Today, Israel has more trees than a hundred years ago. Almost 100% of all wastewater is reused for agriculture. 70% of drinking water comes from desalinated seawater, and more than half of the vegetables for export come from the desert south.

Own Eyes—Vivian Rinat, director of the JNF: "These facts are incredible. The best way to experience Israel's success is to visit the country. Meet the people, eat the delicious food, and see the wonders with your own eyes. That will give you enough energy for the next 75 years!"

Miraculous—What has been achieved in the field of science and invention is also miraculous. Here is a brief list of Israel's numerous discoveries, some of which changed the world: solar energy, drip irrigation, cherry tomatoes, the Epilady (the first device for women to wax electronically). And, of course, the family game Rummikub. Even if it is not always mentioned, they are all originally Israeli inventions.

Health—Small and large Israeli companies provide inventions that are good for our health and the well-being of the planet. Like Better Juice's sugar-free juices, Tifa's responsible packaging, and a multitude of vegetarian and vegan products. Like Tivall's vegetarian smoked sausage, specially developed for the Dutch market and delicious on a sandwich, with hotchpotch or sauerkraut in winter. Or Redefine Meat, a product made of 3D-printed vegetable 'meat', currently the first in the world. It is already available in a number of restaurants in the Netherlands. Then the Israeli wines that are causing a furore and winning awards around the world. Vines can be found from the north to the south, yes, even in the desert.

'Camera Pill'—In the medical field is the 'camera pill', developed for simple and painless internal bowel examination. The idea is simple. The patient swallows the pill, a mini camera with a transmitter. As it travels inside, a number of pictures are taken and sent to a recorder that the patient carries in a waist bag. But there is much more. Israeli scientists have discovered new methods of measuring and injecting insulin for diabetics. Copaxone, a drug that inhibits the physical breakdown caused by multiple sclerosis (MS) comes from Israel, as do the two other well-known MS drugs Betaseron and Avonex.

Stem Cell Therapy—To better treat Parkinson's, a stem cell therapy has been developed. There is a new method to combat acne, and an automated system to work more efficiently and avoid mistakes, such as writing out the wrong drugs. Equipment has been developed for both diagnostic and treatment methods, including computed tomography (CT) scanners, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) systems, ultrasound scanners, nuclear medical cameras, and surgery lasers.

Curious and Inventive—What is the reason so many world-class inventions have their origins in Israel? Objectively, it is because of the military industry, which is well known. As a result, investors are always interested in what is happening in Israel. Also, the government puts a lot of money into all kinds of research. Not objectively... Israelis are curious, inventive and look beyond.

Beewise—Start-up Beewise developed the world's first autonomous beehive. A two-by-five-metre container that can accommodate 40 bee colonies, some two million bees. Using artificial intelligence and robotics, the bees' habitat is monitored.

Independence—Another Israeli invention is the ReWalk, a creation of engineer Amit Goffer, founder of Argo Medical Technologies. "In 1997, I was paralysed in an accident and discovered that in this kind of circumstance, only the wheelchair is there to propel you forward," says Amit. ReWalk is a robotic suit that allows wheelchair users to walk, sit and stand again. This with the help of crutches and a system of motion sensors, minicomputers and rechargeable batteries wrapped in very light material. Not only does the disabled person regain much of their independence, but moving their limbs prevents all kinds of 'wheelchair symptoms', such as bowel and urinary tract problems.

Information Technology—Then there is a multitude of IT (information technology) inventions. It does not matter if you do not (re)know all of them:



Young Israeli inventors at a congress. | Photo: Flash90



Prof Elka Tuitou of the Israeli School of Pharmacy with her invention: a nanotechnology for administering drugs through the skin | Photo: Flash90

security software, network firewalls, antivirus programmes, System Software, Microsoft Operating System software (XP and Vista), Google's search engine, hardware, Disk on Key (USB stick), Wifi, Intel Pentium Chips, the navigation system WAZE, and the SniffPhone, a device that can diagnose diseases by analysing smell. When it comes to telecommunications, Israeli inventions have also made the world look different. Think of mobile telephony, the camera phone chip, voicemail, and Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP), such as Skype, Digital Voice and Dutchphone.

Mazel Tov—It's quite a list, it will leave you breathless, and all in just 75 years. We say: *Mazel tov* Israel, keep it up, we will keep writing about it.

Isreality in Austria—Time for Take-Off

Marie-Louise Weissenböck and the Isreality Team

On 22 April 2023, the time had come—after four months of planning, promoting and networking, our kick-off event took place in Vienna. Young adults between 18 and 35 years old were invited to an evening with a lecture and fellowship, followed by an Israeli buffet with falafel, hummus, pita, sesame bread and much more.

More than 30 young people accepted the invitation and followed the teaching of Tobias Kraemer, a theologian from Stuttgart. He illuminated the topic 'What does Jesus have to do with Israel?' with selected Bible texts and sketches. His starting point was: "If we only want to know how to be saved, it is enough to understand the cross and the resurrection. But if we want to understand Jesus, we must go back to Judaism. For Jesus was, and is, a Jew. Understanding Jesus is crucial. Because we don't just believe in the cross and resurrection, we believe in a person: Jesus!"

Beginning with explanations of Jesus' life before his baptism, Jesus as a scriptural theologian, rabbi and exegete, Jesus as Messiah, the cross and resurrection, and Jesus' return to earth, Tobias took his audience on an exciting journey through the Bible. Also, statements of Jesus and Paul, which today are often interpreted one-sidedly or wrongly, were put into the necessary Jewish context and thus presented themselves in a completely new light.

At the end of his lecture, those present agreed that as Christians who believe in Jesus, the Jewish Messiah, we can only stand in friendship and solidarity alongside the Jewish people and Israel. There is no alternative position.

After another half hour of questions and discussions, the Israeli buffet was opened and the conversations about this exciting topic continued during the meal.

The success of the kick-off evening and the great interest expressed in such events has greatly encouraged us to organise similar meetings in the future as well, building



Tobias Kraemer, teaching at the relaunch of Isreality in Austria.

bridges between the Jewish people and Austria—and thus being a blessing for Israel as a young generation.

Messianic Era Approaching

■ Benjamin Philip
Director | Hineni

Suddenly, the world is surprised by protests in Israel, with many thinking it is solely about democracy. In my view, however, the protests reveal a struggle that has existed since Biblical times and is now returning with the Jewish people to the Promised Land.

The true struggle revolves around whether Israel should be a secular democracy protected by a secular Israeli Supreme Court or should be a democracy where democratically elected politicians can pass laws taking into account a growing population in Israel that is in favour of maintaining a Jewish identity and traditions.

Israel's Supreme Court is not democratically elected and yet has the power to reject democratically passed laws based on secular laws and/or principles. In doing so, the focus is often on a (secular) minority and sometimes goes against a Jewish majority and centuries-old Jewish traditions.



This situation has already been foretold by many prophets (including Ezekiel) as a sign that the Messianic era is coming. Therefore, these protests for or against a Jewish Israel are only cause for optimism and joy. For Israel will come to maturity and eventually be restored as God's people to be a light to the nations. The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:3b).

Israel Has Turned 75

■ Dr David Portowicz
Director | The Jaffa Institute

Israel just celebrated its 75th birthday. But, after recent internal unrest, you might be asking the question: Was there a reason to celebrate?

Any historian looking back on Israel's magical transformation over the past 75 years is obliged to express the well-known American slogan: "You've come a long way, baby". The miraculous return of a people to their homeland after a 2000-year exile is only one aspect of the wonder. Israel has emerged to be a nation with more Bible scholars than ever before in its history while at the same providing extraordinarily disproportionate contributions to technology, medical advancements, art and music. Not surprisingly, Israel was just found to be the 4th happiest place to live in the world.

The tiny nation standing out in a neighbourhood that includes a number of enemies still faces challenges, but, at the end of the day, Israel prides itself on its progress against the odds, its unwavering belief in making peace when possible, and its ever-optimistic approach to the future.

A special reason to be joyful is that more and more children grow up with the knowledge that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob continues to shine His countenance upon them, and they see with their own eyes the fulfilment of the Words of the Holy Prophets. The children of Israel see God's miracles as everyday occurrences.



So, yes, unequivocally, there are a multitude of reasons to celebrate Israel's 75th birthday and to look forward to the next 75 years!

Israel is the Greatest Miracle

■ Sondra Oster Baras
Director | Christian Friends of Israeli Communities (CFOIC)

Israel is the greatest miracle of all time. Over 3,000 years ago, God promised that after a time of dispersion to the far corners of the earth, He would restore us to our precious Land of Israel, where we would prosper (Deuteronomy 30).

Fulfilling this promise meant nurturing the Jewish people throughout the exile, ensuring they would remain a unique people. God kept His eye on His people, kept His eye on His land and joined them together, granting them independence in 1948. An amazing miracle indeed!

When Jews came back to the land during the late 19th century, the land was desolate. When the State was established, millions of new immigrants poured into the country with nothing but the clothes on their backs.



There was no housing, not enough food and very few jobs. But there was a dream and a drive and faith. Today, 75 years later, Israel is a high-tech giant, a diverse society, a robust democracy, and a nation constantly growing in faith. We still have so much to accomplish, but Israel is truly a cause for celebration!

Overview of our projects

Part of our mission is to comfort Israel and the Jewish people through prayer and action. If you would like to support one of our projects you can complete the coupon on page 16 or make an online donation. Thank you very much for your support!

Aliyah

Aliyah is the Hebrew word for the return of the Jewish people to Israel. We support Aliyah mainly from Ukraine (and the former Soviet Union), but also from India and France. Furthermore, we help new immigrants (in Hebrew: olim) to integrate into Israeli society.



Hineni Soup Kitchen

We help the poor of Israel, by providing them with food. We do this in partnership with the Hineni Center in Jerusalem, headed by Benjamin Philip. Your gift for the soup kitchen goes directly to the purchase of food.



Holocaust Survivors

We support impoverished Holocaust survivors in Israel and Ukraine through various projects which provide assistance to survivors of the Holocaust. Those survivors are elderly and will not be among us for long, and there is a growing demand for practical assistance.



Christian Friends of Israeli Communities (CFOIC)

You can support the Jewish communities in Judea and Samaria, the heart of Biblical Israel. The main purpose is to encourage the people in the Biblical Heartland and to show them that there are Christians throughout the world who support them and share the belief that the areas of Judea and Samaria are part of Israel's inheritance.



Food Parcel Campaign Ukraine

We distribute food parcels amongst Jewish people in Ukraine. These parcels are handed out to Holocaust survivors, needy families, and the sick. Those food parcels are a sign of friendship that demonstrates your support for our Jewish brothers and sisters and that they are not alone.



Arab Christians

Life for Christians in Bethlehem is often not easy. Christians for Israel supports the First Baptist Church of Rev Naim Khoury in Bethlehem and Jerusalem. The members of this church spread the gospel among Arabs and share their love and heart for Israel and the Jewish people.



For country-specific or further information on our projects, go to our website, www.c4israel.org

Elena Kovarsky Retires

Koen Carlier
Aliyah Fieldworker | Christians for Israel Ukraine

On Friday, 12 May, we (C4I Forum participants) visited Kibbutz Revivim in the Negev. We not only met with olim there but also said goodbye to Elena Kovarsky (pictured right). Since 2007, she led the First Home in the Homeland programme, a wonderful integration programme of The Jewish Agency for new olim in various kibbutzim in Israel. I first met Elena Kovarsky in 2012 at The Jewish Agency's office in Vinnitsa, Ukraine. Elena had a large model of a kibbutz with her and gave a presentation on the 'First Home in the Homeland' integration project, which I had never heard of. After the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1991, leaders of several kibbutzim got together to think about how they could help accommodate the large influx of Soviet Jews who came—with almost nothing—to Israel. Eventually, they decided to free up cottages in a number of kibbutzim where (especially) young families with children could live. While the children went to school in the kibbutz, the parents could learn Hebrew for five months, five times a week, five hours a day. The safe environment of the kibbutz ensured a 'soft landing and smooth integration'. Elena herself, with her husband and daughter in 1991, coming from Russia, also attended the First Home in the Homeland programme. In 2007, Elena was asked by The Jewish Agency to head this programme. Elena agreed. She said she wanted to give something back to Israel and to the programme that had helped her integrate herself and her family. In 2013, The Jewish Agency decided to stop the integration programme; there were insufficient funds. Elena was in sackcloth and ashes. How to proceed now? She wrote a letter to the board of Christians for Israel with the distress cry "Save the programme!" Her cry for help was heeded.

The board decided to contribute financially so that the integration programme could continue. 'A miracle,' Elena called it afterwards. There are now 55 kibbutzim affiliated with First Home in the Homeland, and the cooperation with Christians for Israel is still running like clockwork. Recently, Elena told us she wanted to step back to pass the torch on to the younger generation: Juliya and Valeria, who themselves integrated into Israel through First Home in the Homeland. So, on 12 May, there was a beautiful but emotional farewell party for Elena. There were speeches by Rev Cornelis Kant, Frank van Oordt and me. And of course, the presents, snacks and drinks were not missing. Elena also spoke. She assured us that she would keep the same phone number, so we could still reach her. We will keep that in mind!



Elena with the Christians for Israel Forum participants.

YES! I Want to Support Christians for Israel

CHRISTIANS FOR ISRAEL MINISTRY

- My donation for ministry costs, print & post
- ALIYAH - BRING THE JEWS HOME
- One person from Ukraine - € 135 | US \$150
- One family (5 people) - € 675 | US \$750
- One bus (25 people) - € 4500 | US \$5000
- First Home in the Homeland - € 450 | US \$465
- Bnei Menashe (India) (1 person) - € 950 | US \$1000
- Aliyah Ethiopia

SOCIAL WELFARE PROJECTS

- Food Parcels in Ukraine - € 15 | US \$15 each
- Children at Risk - Jaffa Institute
- Hineni Soup Kitchen - € 7,50 | US \$7.50 per meal
- Holocaust Survivors
- Christian Friends of Israeli Communities (CFOIC)
- Arab Christians

TOTAL DONATION

DONATION

TEACHING RESOURCES

- Israel on Trial (Book) by Andrew Tucker
- 70 Questions About Israel (Book) by Chan Siew Fong
- Israel 70 Years (One-off Collector's Magazine)
- Jerusalem 50th Anniversary (One-off Collector's Magazine)
- Israel: Covenants & Kingdom (Book) by Willem JJ Glashouwer
- Why Israel? (Book) Why Jerusalem? (Book) Why End Times? (Book)
- Why Israel? (Trilogy Book Set)
- Why Israel? Study Guides (Trilogy Book Set)
- Why Israel? (DVD) Why Jerusalem? (DVD) Why End Times? (DVD)
- Why Israel? (Trilogy DVD Set)
- Why Israel? (Book, DVD & Study Guide)
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