

ISRAEL

& Christians Today

INTERNATIONAL

June 2024

Sivan–Tamuz 5784

CHRISTIANS FOR
ISRAEL
INTERNATIONAL

Understanding Israel and world events from a Biblical perspective

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Teenagers mark Israel's 76th Independence Day at Saker Park in Jerusalem, 14 May 2024. | Photo: Flash90

Where Does my Help Come From?

Events are moving very fast in the Middle East. In mid-May, Israel marked a sombre Independence Day and Memorial Day. This year, the commemorations were subdued by the toll of the ongoing war in Gaza. The country is still in trauma after the bloodiest day in Jewish history since the Holocaust: 7 October 2023, when militants of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad invaded Israel in an unprecedented terrorist attack and massacred, raped and pillaged over 1200 innocent civilians and soldiers.

The war launched by Israel to defeat Hamas is far from over. There is growing frustration with the war and criticism of the government's failure to ensure the release and repatriation of dozens of Israeli hostages remaining in Hamas captivity in Gaza, where Israel has carried out more than a half-year-long relentless military campaign.

Israel Defense Forces chief of staff Herzl Halevi was recently quoted for the government's lack of commitment to a 'day after' plan in the Gaza Strip that

would help reckon with the security and political vacuum in the war-ravaged territory. Halevi echoed the frustrations of many who see Hamas fighters resuming operations in areas of Gaza where they were supposed to have been neutralised.

The multi-front war against Israel that started with the Hamas pogrom in southern Israel on 7 October 2023, is now more than seven months old, and there appears to be no end in sight as Israel must change the equation in the war against the so-called Iranian resistance axis.

In April the war escalated to such an extent that a direct confrontation between Israel and Iran could no longer be ruled out. That was after the Israeli Air Force on 1 April killed seven top commanders of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards who were meeting in a building next to the Iranian consulate in Damascus.

Iran's response finally came on the night of 13-14 April when more than 300 unmanned kamikaze aircraft, cruise missiles, and ballistic missiles were fired at Israel.

Since then, there have been many developments that will likely affect the dynamics in the region. Iranian President Raisi was killed in a helicopter crash in Iran in mid-May. And on 20th May, International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor Karim Khan announced that he intends to ask the court to issue arrest warrants against not only Hamas leaders but also Israel's political leaders Prime Minister Netanyahu and Defence Minister Galant for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza since 7th October 2023. This is an abhorrent decision, equating the conduct of Israel's leaders seeking to defend their nation with the Hamas terrorist leaders seeking to destroy Israel. It seems like the world is turning upside down.

In the midst of all this, we can be confident that the God of Israel is in control.

"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." Psalm 121:1-2

4



Iran and the Multi-Front War Against Israel

5



Walkathon for the Hostages

8



Why Do They Hate Us?

13



The Roots of Pentecost



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

Colophon

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Mission

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

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Danger of Palestinian Statehood

■ Andrew Tucker

[International Editor | Christians for Israel](#)

On 10 May 2024, the UN General Assembly adopted another resolution about Palestinian statehood—this time upgrading Palestine's status in the UN. And on 22 May, Norway, Spain and Ireland announced they are 'recognising the State of Palestine'.

All of these are political decisions intended to advance the Palestinians' political claims and further pressure and isolate Israel. None of them change the legal situation or the realities on the ground.

The Palestinian leadership (i.e., the Palestine Liberation Organisation—PLO) claims the Palestinians have a right to statehood in all of the 'Palestinian' territories.

The PLO is supported by about two thirds of the states in the world. In 2012, some of these UN member states adopted a resolution (67/19) granting 'Palestine UN non-member observer status'. That opened the floodgates for 'Palestine' to portray itself as a 'state' on the world stage.

On Friday 10 May 2024, these same states adopted yet another resolution in the UN General Assembly (UNGA). The resolution further 'upgrades' the rights of 'the State of Palestine' at the United Nations as an Observer State.

In all of these resolutions, it is a group of about 90 UN member states pushing for the establishment of the State of Palestine. Most of these are Islamic states that are deeply hostile to the existence of a Jewish nation on what is considered Arab/Islamic territory.

Tragically, they are supported by some Western states (like the current Australian government) that are blind to the fact that the current Palestinian leadership is deeply hostile to Western values and interests, and intent on

destroying the Jewish state.

The latest resolution is essentially a political statement. It gives 'Palestine' some procedural rights (e.g., Palestine can participate fully within UN as if it were a state, except it cannot vote in the UNGA or put forward candidates for UN organs). But it does not change the realities on the ground, nor does it affect the legal status of these territories. That is because the UNGA is a political body.

The latest resolution does not make Palestine a state, nor does it grant Palestine membership of the UN. The question of whether Palestine should be a state is a political question, about which UN members are free to discuss and adopt resolutions in the General Assembly. But whether Palestine is a state is not for the UN to decide.

How states are created is a very complex one, on which legal and political opinions differ. Some people (including the Palestinian leadership) argue that the Palestinians have a 'right' to statehood, and that Palestine in fact is already a state.

Others argue that Palestine is not yet a state because it does not have an effective government that controls a defined territory. Moreover, it cannot become a state until it (a) satisfies the conditions of statehood—a defined territory, a people, and an effective government and political independence—and (b) reaches a peace agreement with Israel (as the PLO has agreed in the Oslo Accords).

UN membership, on the other hand, is a matter on which the UN decides. Under the UN Charter, UN membership is open to peace-loving states, and is decided by the UN Security Council (UNSC), not the General Assembly. So far, in the UNSC the United States has opposed every application by the Palestinians for UN membership. With the US elections in sight (November), it remains to be seen

whether the Biden Administration will be able and willing to withstand the growing political pressure on the US to allow Palestine to become a UN member state.

The recent UNGA resolution was intended to ratchet up that pressure. The General Assembly urged the Security Council to favourably consider Palestine's application for full UN membership. According to the General Assembly, the State of Palestine is qualified for full membership in the United Nations in accordance with Article 4 of the Charter of the United Nations.

But the issue of Palestinian statehood is much more than a political or legal question. It is, first and foremost, a military and security matter that forms an existential threat to Israel.

Quite simply—as things currently stand, if a Palestinian state is created it will, in all likelihood, be hijacked by Hamas and other Islamist jihad groups supported, financed and trained by Iran.

This is a situation that Israel certainly cannot be expected to support, and that no peace-loving state in the world should accept. It is therefore alarming that so many states in the UN support the growing claims for a 'two-state solution'.

The reality is that while the Palestinians have a legitimate ambition for independence, there is a long way to go—perhaps generations—before they are likely to develop a peace-loving culture that is necessary to establish a state governed by the rule of law.

Until then, the West must insist that the Palestinians desist from violence, terror and aggression against Israel and the Jewish people, before a Palestinian state can be recognized, and Israel should be supported in carrying out its task of protecting its citizens (Jewish and non-Jewish) from violence and threats of force.

Prayer Points

Protection and Recovery

- *Psalm 121*: "He who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep." Give thanks that God preserved Israel when Israel's enemies fired more than three hundred drones and missiles from Iran (Persia) at Israel in one night (April 13-14).
- Pray for the return of hostages and the recovery of those who have been traumatised.
- Pray for unity in Israel. The people and government are divided over the future direction of the country. Pray that the God of Israel may be sought and found to prepare the way for His people.
- Pray for the protection of the Jewish villages in Judea and Samaria.

Standing with the Jewish People

- Pray that the government and police of your nation will guard the safety of our fellow Jewish citizens.

- Pray that the various churches in your country will stand with the Jewish people.
- Antisemitism has increased alarmingly worldwide. Pray that God and His angels will guard over His people.
- "Blessed are those who bless you, and cursed are those who curse you." *Numbers 24:9b*. When Balaam wanted to curse Israel, he blessed them instead. When God wants His people to be blessed, no one can go against Him. Pray that Israel's enemies will become powerless.

Christians for Israel

- Thank God for the promises He has made to His people.
- Worldwide, many Jews are still returning to Israel. Give thanks that God wants us to be involved in the return of the Jewish people to the Promised Land.

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

World Antisemitism Report:

‘7 October Helped Spread a Fire’



Pro-Israel rally in Amsterdam, October 23. | Photo: Christians for Israel

■ **JNS**

Even before the 7 Oct. invasion, antisemitism was on the rise, but a dramatic spike followed the Hamas attack, according to the 2023 Antisemitism Worldwide report whose findings were released at the beginning of May by Tel Aviv University and the Anti-Defamation League.

The report, ‘Concern for the Future of Jewish Life in the West’, emphasises that while 2023’s leap in antisemitic incidents largely followed 7 Oct., most countries with sizeable Jewish minorities also saw increases in the first nine months of 2023, before the war started.

“7 October helped spread a fire that was already out of control,” the report states, noting that “from Brazil to South Africa, from Italy to Australia, from Belgium to the United States,” antisemitic incidents in western countries rose by dozens of percentage points in 2023 over the year before.

“The aftermath of Hamas’s horrific attack on Israel on 7 October was followed by a tsunami of hate against Jewish communities worldwide,” said Anti-Defamation League CEO and National Director Jonathan Greenblatt.

“Unprecedented levels of antisemitism have surged globally in the streets of London, New York, Paris, Santiago, Johannesburg and beyond.

“This year’s report is incredibly alarming, with documented unprecedented levels of antisemitism, including in the US where 2023 saw the highest number of antisemitic incidents in the US ever recorded by the ADL,” he added.

In the United States, the ADL recorded 7,523 incidents in 2023 compared to 3,697 in 2022. The number of assaults increased from 111 in 2022 to 161 in 2023, and of vandalism, 1,288 to 2,106.

In New York, the city with the largest Jewish population in the world, the New York Police Department recorded 325 anti-Jewish hate crimes in 2023 in comparison to 261 in 2022.

In Los Angeles, the city’s police department recorded 165 antisemitic incidents, up from 86, and in Chicago, there were 50 up from 39.

Elsewhere in the West

Other countries also saw dramatic increases in the number of antisemitic attacks, according to data collected from governmental agencies, law enforcement authorities, Jewish organisations, media and fieldwork.

In France, the number of incidents rose from 436 in 2022 to 1,676 in 2023, with the number of physical assaults increasing from 43 to 85.

In the United Kingdom, the number of incidents spiked from 1,662 to 4,103 (physical assaults from 136 to 266).

In Germany, antisemitic incidents rose from 2,639 to 3,614. In Italy, they jumped from 241 to 454 and in Austria from 719 to 1,147.

Australia recorded 622 antisemitic incidents in October and November 2023, in comparison to 79 during the same period in 2022.

Argentina saw a jump of 171 incidents in 2023, from 427 to 598. Brazil recorded 1,774 incidents, up from 432 in 2022, and Mexico recorded 78 incidents, up from 21 the year before.

In South Africa, incidents rose from 68 to 207.

According to Professor Uriya Shavit, head of the Centre for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry and the Irwin Cotler Institute:

“The year is not 1938, not even 1933. Yet if current trends continue, the curtain will descend on the ability to lead Jewish lives in the west—to wear a Star of David, attend synagogues and community centers, send kids to Jewish schools, frequent a Jewish club on campus, or speak Hebrew.”

Shavit added, “With bomb threats against synagogues becoming a daily occurrence, Jewish existence in the west is forced to fortify itself, and the more it does so, the more the sense of security and normalcy is undermined.”

While noting that the State of Israel’s ability to help Jewish communities in the Diaspora is limited, he criticised it for not doing “even the little that can be done.”

“The main contributions of the government are pompous statements and sporadic initiatives,” Shavit said.

In the report, former Canadian Justice Minister and Attorney General Irwin Cotler offers an 11-point plan for globally combating the rising Jew-hatred.

The plan calls for governments to enact national action plans to combat antisemitism, more Holocaust education and celebrating the positive contributions of the Jewish people.

Short News

Returning Home



Six months after the massacre of 7 October, seventy per cent of residents from Israeli villages near the Gaza Strip have returned home. For towns and *kibbutzim* that lie further from the Gaza Strip (such as Sderot), the percentage is higher than from communities directly at the border. This is due to the fact that many homes very close to the border were completely destroyed. | Photo: Flash90

PA Seeks UN Membership

The PA has taken the first steps in applying for an official vote to join the UN. The Palestinians’ application for full recognition was formally launched in 2011 and ended with the PA obtaining official observer status a year later, but that is not full voting membership.

Torah Scroll out of Solidarity

Two years ago, Ukrainian President Zelensky wrote the first letter of a new *Torah* scroll, and in early April, Israeli President Herzog wrote the final letters. In doing so, a beautiful initiative by the Ukrainian Chief Rabbi of Kiev, Jonatan Markowitz, was completed. Rabbi Markowitz came up with the initiative shortly after the outbreak of war in Ukraine to underscore the solidarity and connection between the Jewish people in both countries. The *Torah* scroll, which is dedicated to peace, will be on display in the Kiev synagogue in the coming months.

UNRWA Ties Cut



Israel has decided to cut all ties with UNRWA. UNRWA is the organisation that coordinates all aid to the Palestinians. The reason Israel provides is that UNRWA is part of the problem: “UNRWA intensifies the conflict instead of trying to alleviate it.” | Photo: Flash90

Iran and the Multi-Front War Against Israel

■ Yochanan Visser

Correspondent in Israel

The multi-front war against Israel that started with the Hamas pogrom in southern Israel on 7 October 2023, is now more than seven months old. There appears to be no end in sight as Israel must change the equation in the war against the so-called Iranian resistance axis.

In April, the war escalated to such an extent that a direct confrontation between Israel and Iran could no longer be ruled out.

That was after the Israeli Air Force on 1 April killed seven top commanders of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards who were meeting in a building next to the Iranian consulate in Damascus.

Among the slain IRGC commanders was Mohammad Reza Zahedi, the commander of the Quds Force in Syria, and his deputy, General Hadi Haj Rahimi.

That liquidation in Syria, the 18th since December 2023, was too much for Iran, which vowed to take revenge and, through its leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, announced that Israel would be “punished”.

Iran’s response finally came on the night of 13-14 April when more than 300 unmanned kamikaze aircraft, cruise missiles, and ballistic missiles were fired at Israel.

Ultimately, 99 per cent of those projectiles were shot down inside and outside Israel by a coalition secretly formed in 2022 by US General Frank McKenzie supplemented by Jordan’s air force to the surprise of many. More about Jordan’s motivations for its surprising intervention later.

Israel responded in the early hours of Friday, 19 April, when a radar-invisible hypersonic missile struck the air defences of the Natanz nuclear reprocessing plant near the city of Isfahan.

The Israeli government originally decided to carry out a major retaliatory attack on a series of selected targets in Iran, but this was abandoned under American pressure as President Joe Biden’s administration did not want to risk being drawn into a regional war.

The purpose and how the attack was carried out (from Iraqi airspace) sent a clear signal to the regime in Tehran: Israel was able to hit Iran’s nuclear facilities without Iranian air defences detecting it.

The escalation was over, and Iran, as well as Israel, appear to have returned to what the IDF refers to as the “MABAM doctrine”, the ‘war between the wars’ that characterised the battle between the two archenemies for years.

Iran, meanwhile, is working hard on its imperialist plans for the Middle East and the world and is trying to expand its influence into Africa.

Defence ties with Sudan were recently strengthened, with Iran selling scores of attack drones to the country at the Red Sea. Relationship with Niger has also greatly improved.

The latter is related to Iran’s nuclear programme because Niger has large reserves of yellowcake, a substance used for uranium production.

However, Iran also continues to try to expand its imperialist programme in the Middle East. In this



Israeli soldiers remove the remains of a missile fired from Iran a few weeks ago, near the southern Israeli city of Arad, 2 May 2024. | Photo: Flash90

context, there are fears in Israel that Iran will attempt to bring neighbouring Jordan under its sphere of influence.

Iran already uses Jordan as a smuggling route for weapons and ammunition to the various terrorist groups in Judea and Samaria, the heartland of Israel. However, there are signs that Iran may want Shiite militias now stationed in Syria to infiltrate Jordan.

This is a nightmare scenario for Israel but also for the Hashemite regime of King Abdullah II.

For this reason, the presence of IDF troops in the Jordan Valley has already been increased, and increased attention is being paid to arms smuggling to Judea and Samaria.

Iran already uses Jordan as a smuggling route for weapons and ammunition to the various terrorist groups in Judea and Samaria, the heartland of Israel.

At the same time, Jordan previously carried out unprecedented air strikes on smugglers in southern Syria.

The situation on the so-called heartland front has recently reached worrying proportions as Iran has managed to convert the cities of Tulkarm and Jenin in Samaria into forward IRGC bases.

Islamic Jihad, which is fully funded and armed by Iran, has made Jenin its headquarters and has complete control over what happens in the city.

The IDF, for its part, has long been on an offensive to frustrate the build-up of the terror infrastructure in Judea and Samaria with raids carried out daily in Palestinian towns and villages, usually resulting in long firefights with the terrorists, who are increasingly better equipped with Iranian help.

In Iraq, meanwhile, Iran is trying to use its proxy umbrella organisation, the Islamic Resistance of Iraq (IRI), to eliminate the US military presence in both Syria and Iraq.

After a short break, almost daily drone and missile attacks on the US bases in the two countries by IRI were resumed on 22 April. The US response to this aggression has been minimal, encouraging Iran to continue its attacks.

IRI is also directly involved in the fight against Israel

and regularly attempts to carry out drone attacks on targets in the Jewish state but has so far been unsuccessful.

Then there is the front with the Ansar Allah or Houthi militia in Yemen, which has become a major problem for international maritime shipping in both the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean.

Ansar Allah (The Helpers of Allah) operates as a full-fledged division of the IRGC and has highly sophisticated weapons with which the militia has carried out nearly 60 attacks on ships it says have ties to Israel since November 2023.

Ansar Allah has also sabotaged fibre communications

cables in the waters off the coast of Yemen and disrupted internet traffic in Africa.

At the beginning of May, Ansar Allah leader Abdul-Malik al-Houthi announced that his militia would now also attack Israeli shipping in the Mediterranean. For the time being, however, it is unclear how Ansar Allah would be able to execute these attacks, given the distance from Yemen to the Mediterranean Sea.

Finally, there is another worrying development concerning Iran. According to Rafael Grossi, the director of the International Atomic Energy Agency IAEA, Iran is now just two weeks away from achieving breakout capability in its nuclear programme.

The Islamic Republic now has enough highly enriched uranium to produce five nuclear warheads for its ballistic missiles, experts say.

Grossi had previously reported that IAEA inspectors had lost track of developments in Iran’s nuclear programme. At the same time, senior IRGC officials indicated, after the escalation with Israel, that Iran could now start to produce atomic weapons.

This now is the state of affairs in Iran’s asymmetric war against Israel and the United States.

Walkathon for the Hostages



(Left) On 7 April 2024, exactly six months after their abduction from Israel, around 1,000 people took to the streets in Vienna, Austria, to show solidarity with the 133 hostages still in captivity of Hamas-terrorists in Gaza. | Photo: C4I Austria. (Right) Israeli flags, posters of the hostages and yellow vests were seen during the Walkathon (march) in the old city of Vienna. | Photo: C4I Austria.

■ **Marie-Louise Weissenböck**
Chair | Christians for Israel Austria

Over a thousand people took to the streets in solidarity with the hostages and their families on 7 April 2024, in Vienna, Austria.

On 7 October 2023, over 240 children, women and men were forcibly abducted from Israel to Gaza by terrorists led by the Palestinian terror organisation Hamas. Many of these innocent people had been dragged from their homes and from a site where a music festival was taking place.

Exactly six months later, on 7 April 2024, 133 hostages were still being held by Hamas. Among them is a 15-month-old toddler, Kfir, and his four-year-old brother, Ariel. The oldest hostage is 86, and there are also several young women aged between 18 and 26, as well as chronically ill people. To date, the hostages have not been visited by the

Red Cross, have not received any medication, and their families do not know whether they are still alive.

The peaceful Walkathon (march) through Vienna demanded the unconditional and immediate release of all 133 hostages and drew attention to the gross violation of their human rights.

The Walkathon was organised by Christians for Israel Austria, WIZO Austria, JöH (the Jewish-Austrian Student Union), ZusammenVienna (Israelis living in Vienna) and Vienna BringthemhomeNOW.

Rally

After an hour's march through Vienna's old city, during which leaflets with information about the hostages were handed out to onlookers, the thousand participants reached the Square of the Dome of St. Stephans, Austria's biggest cathedral, where a moving rally was held. Touching reports about the

hostages, as well as the last telephone conversations before their abduction, were presented by prominent actors and well-known personalities as well as relatives of hostages. The rally ended with a Jewish prayer and the singing of *Hatikva* (hope), the national anthem of the State of Israel.

Support from Jewish and Christian Organisations

The Walkathon was supported by an array of organisations, including Bnei Akiva Vienna, Chabad House Vienna, Habait Israeli Community, Hashomer Hatzair, The Jewish Community of Vienna (IKG), Jad be Jad, Jewish Women Austria, Jewish Welcome Service, Jewish Institute for Adult Education (JIFE), Keren Hajessod Austria, Coordination Committee for Christian-Jewish Cooperation, Mizrachi, Ohel Avraham Synagogue, and others.

Short News

99-year-old Holocaust Survivor Tends Graves of Soldiers



There are some stories that need to be told, just like the story of 99-year-old Yaakov Lubinewski from Kadima-Zoran. His entire Polish family was murdered by the Nazis during World War II. Since the 7 Oct. attack, Yakoov has been heading to the cemetery on his scooter every day to tend the graves of two soldiers from his town who were killed during Hamas's invasion of southern Israel. "It feels like they are my own children. I know what pain is. The pain will not pass, and it will be hard to recover, but remember there is something to live for." | Photo: Rina Castelnovo/JNS

Illegal Entry

Since 7 Oct., Israel has been tightening its checks on who can enter Israel from the Palestinian territories in the West Bank for security reasons. The measures have also left many Israeli companies without employees. As a result, thousands of Palestinians are now entering Israel in all sorts of illegal ways to still be able to work, especially in construction. Meanwhile, 2,900 people have been arrested so far for illegally entering Israel.

McDonald's Stays in Israel



McDonald's plans to buy back all its franchise restaurants in Israel. There are 225 restaurants involved. Local McDonald's are struggling after the franchise owner announced it would give free meals to soldiers fighting Hamas in Gaza. This led to all kinds of boycotts, which now put thousands of jobs at risk. With the repurchase of the restaurants, employees will keep their jobs, and the chain will continue to be located in a variety of places in Israel. | Photo: Flashgo

If We Could Turn Back Time

■ **Bryce Turner**
Executive Director | Christians for Israel New Zealand

While in Israel members of the recent ANZAC Solidarity Mission met with Danielle Mor of the Jewish Agency. Christians for Israel sponsor some of the work they do. The following is an excerpt from Danielle.

"If we could turn back time. If we could somehow use that ability of superman to change the earth's rotation and go back, not to when we were young, not for a winning lottery ticket, but simply go back to 6 Oct., to the last day in which our lives as Israelis, as Jews, seemed to make sense. When all of us in Israel could take a deep breath without feeling tears sneak up in our eyes or a clenching grasp in our throat. When we still believed with every

fabric of our being, that the state of Israel assured us that the fundamental promise of never again, would be fulfilled.

Never again will there be times like in all the 2000 years before 1948, when entire Jewish communities were defenceless, at the mercy of a cult of death seeking to murder us, simply because we are Jews. The Jewish Agency for Israel, the organisation I am so proud to serve, has upheld that promise for every Jewish community around the world since 1948—rescuing the Jews from Yemen, Iraq and Egypt, from Ethiopia in astounding airlifts, from the crumbling Soviet Union, from war-torn Yugoslavia and of course, even now from Ukraine. We proudly promised never again and never once believed this promise would be broken, on Israel's 75th year, in our

own homeland.

The Jewish Agency stands by the weakest of our society, by the elderly and Holocaust survivors, the new *olim*, the children and families at risk, and of course the many thousands of victims of terror and dozens of communities attacked.

We are committed to not leaving anyone behind, including the business owners who found themselves after 7 Oct., not knowing how they will put the next meal on their family's table, or how their business can recover after they do reserve-duty in Gaza for 3 months.

Thank you for your partnership with the Jewish Agency. With your help, together, we will be okay. Because we are the Jewish people. Am Israel Chai."

Read more on page 15.

To Answer the Question

■ Mandy Worby

Christians for Israel Australia

To answer the question... I took a few days to gather my thoughts on this, because someone asked me if I was scared while I was in Israel, and they were really concerned that I was in danger. They couldn't understand why I went there, and they really couldn't understand why I stayed there when the attack from Iran was imminent.

One day while we were walking through the Old City of Jerusalem, while Ramadan was still going, we entered through the Lion Gate which you enter from coming up the Kidron Valley. We'd walked from Gethsemane on the lower slope of the Mount of Olives, up and through the Lion Gate to visit the Pools of Bethesda. Then continued further into the Old City through the Muslim Quarter, and out through the Damascus Gate and then a short walk up the road to the Garden Tomb.

When we walked out the Damascus Gate, I noticed a security box with Israeli armed police and security—which we'd seen plenty of throughout the Old City as well—and everything was very peaceful. We were grateful for that of course, but I remember walking through the Damascus Gate, seeing lots of young men and women walking along, and thinking that any one of them could potentially be wielding a weapon that they could use to attack anyone walking by. We kept going and I didn't think anymore of it.

That night I read a report—and saw security video confirming it—of the police and armed security arresting a young man at the same security box I'd walked past earlier that day. The young man had a huge kitchen knife taped to his torso. The security personnel prevented a terror attack that day when they captured him. I don't know if that took place before or after I'd been there, but it definitely took place where I'd been hours earlier.

I was safe in Israel, quite possibly safer in Israel than elsewhere in the world.

Was I afraid after that? I can categorically say no, I wasn't afraid.

Look, while we were in Israel, while Israel is in the middle of a war; with rockets being fired into Israel in the north on a daily basis from Hezbollah terrorists; while they have hostages still experiencing horrifying abuses every day and may even be dead at this stage; with terror cells being exposed and violent clashes happening in Muslim cities throughout Judea and Samaria, and the unprecedented attack from Iran that Israel was miraculously protected from...several terror attacks took place in my home country of Australia.

In fact, between the 6th and 12th of April, 34 terror attacks took place in 13 different countries. Those attacks resulted in 172 deaths and 229 people injured. In March alone, there were 157 terror attacks in 22 different countries that resulted in 771 killed, and 688 people injured, 7 of those attacks were suicide bombings.

Terrorism is happening all over the world, it's not unique to the conflict between Israel and the Arabs.

If my information is correct, there is currently war and terrorism taking place in Nigeria from terrorist insurgency, Somalia with civil war, Burkina Faso from terrorist insurgency, Mexico with its drug war, Syria with civil war, Mali with civil war and terrorist

insurgency, Democratic Republic of Congo with terrorist insurgency, Ethiopia is experiencing civil war, Yemen has civil war, Pakistan is dealing with border conflict with Afghanistan, Haiti has both civil war and gang war going on, Colombia has civil war and a drug war, Israel is at war with Hamas for their terrorist insurgency and proxy war from third parties in Lebanon and Yemen.

In just 2022/2023 there were wars not only in the countries I just named, but also in Iraq, South Sudan, India, Cameroon, Niger, Philippines, Central African Republic, Uganda, Mozambique, Chad, Benin, Togo, Libya, Ghana, Tanzania, Algeria, Mauritania, China, and Tunisia. How many times have we heard that a terror attack has happened in the UK, or France, or New Zealand or the USA or some other place in the world we would ordinarily consider to be safe as houses? The world is a much smaller place these days.

I know that God cares for all people around the world, and He has made Himself available to all who would call upon Him. That's the kind of God He is. But there's only one nation on earth that He's made specific promises to, and that's Israel.

Psalm 121:4-6 says, "No, the Guardian of Israel never slumbers or sleeps, Adonai is your Guardian; at your right hand Adonai provides you with shade—the sun can't strike you during the day or even the moon at night." (CJB)

2 Chronicles 6:5-6 says, "Since the day I brought My people out of Egypt, I chose no city from any of the tribes of Israel to build a house, so that My name might be there; nor did I choose anyone to be the leader of My people Israel. But now I have chosen Yerushalayim, so that My name can be there; and I have chosen David to be over My people Israel." (CJB)

I mean WOW!!! God has chosen the city of Jerusalem for His name to dwell. God has made a great many promises to His chosen people Israel, and the land inheritance He promised them. So why wouldn't I want to be there? Why wouldn't I feel safe there?

Everyone is going to die some day, in fact ten out of ten people die. It's going to happen somewhere...at home, driving a car, in a hospital bed, or perhaps while we're overseas. Going to Israel wasn't a death wish, I love life...but I also worship a God who loves life, and who promises abundant life to those who know and love Him.

So to anyone who wondered why I would travel to Israel while she's at war, it was to love, bless and stand in solidarity with God's people. It was to show them consideration and compassion at a time when the entire world seems to have lost its collective mind and moral compass, and turned against them for defending themselves in a war that was foisted on them through an orchestrated terror attack that was so vile and deranged, it's hard to describe.

Israel is not the villain, Israel is the victim and she's determined not to be anymore. Why wouldn't I stand with God's people? Why wouldn't I pick my side and stand firmly on it, choosing life and justice, over terror, evil and death?

I was safe in Israel, quite possibly safer in Israel than I might be elsewhere in the world. If you ever have the opportunity to travel to Israel, take it. With both hands, take it. It will change your life, and just might open your eyes to a reality you never expected.

| Photos: C4I Australia



The police watch tower overseeing the Damascus Gate.



The very busy Damascus Gate with the police watch tower.



Our ANZAC team on the Mount of Olives overlooking Old Jerusalem.



Our ANZAC team outside the totally destroyed Sderot Police Station.



At the Nova Dance Festival grounds where 364 youth were murdered.

The Second Visit’s Surprising Difficulty

Bryce Turner
Executive Director | Christians for Israel
New Zealand

For some reason I thought that visiting a second time would be easier. Rather than a hasty view from a distance, the ANZAC Solidarity Mission members walked the grounds in person. This time there were other people around, we were a group, and the site has changed considerably as it has morphed from a farm party venue into a national memorial.

There’s a feeling, hard to explain, but a kind of heaviness. Even without the sombre scenery of flags, signs, and freshly-planted trees, the air itself seems sad.

Hundreds of people died here, or were taken captive by depraved monsters to face either a delayed death, or worse.

Genesis 4:10 speaks—albeit in an entirely different context—of a murder, the first recorded killing of a precious human life. “Your brother’s blood is crying out to me from the ground, like a voice calling for revenge”.

Maybe that’s it. The blood of so many brothers and sisters is crying out to me from the ground, “like voices calling for revenge”.

Some scream silently of unspeakable grief, the photos, the messages, they testify to a life taken by murderers.

The trees, the light bush, it feels a lot like a eucalyptus grove somewhere in Australia. The ground is dusty, with tufts of grasses and small shrubs scattered thinly, dry leaves forming a gentle carpet in between. Leaves in the canopy cast gently moving shadows on the ground, yet one can still easily see through the trunks. But not just trees, for scattered around what was supposed to be a place of peace and harmony jarring bright colours interrupt the serenity. Small structures, hastily erected, and adorned with photos and messages, protrude. Out of place, they don’t belong here. Some scream silently of unspeakable grief, the photos, the messages, they testify to a life taken by murderers. Others, however, are different. Even for those unable to read the Hebrew, these other signs speak of perhaps an even deeper tragedy. They speak of the agony of not knowing. Families, loved ones, children, parents, all sit in the most incredible pain as they await news—any news. The absence of news means that the chaotic cloud of news media, social media, opinions—informed and clueless—all descend and fill the mind. The genuine concern, and the conspiracy theories; the speculation, and the testimonies of

released hostages—testimonies of terror; the messages of hope for a hostage deal, the news of Hamas cruelly changing the rules again; the interview of a survivor healing and living again, the news of more young soldiers killed; all fill the vacuum of information, with the solicitude of not knowing anything. The Nova Party—or more correctly, the Nova Festival—was meant to be a celebration of peace. In a tragic irony, it was a gathering of like minded souls devoted to finding a better way in a country surrounded by violence and hatred. Kindred spirits— whether Jewish, Arab or anything else—danced with joy, together, the pressures of selfish agendas banished by the music. Now, the blood of 364 murdered Israelis—including 17 Police officers—calls from the ground. Forty partygoers were abducted to Gaza. Initially the subject of a string of conspiracy theories about supposed Israeli involvement in the killings, right through to the Palestinian Authority’s preposterous claim that Hamas wasn’t involved at all— that the IDF had deliberately bombed the civilian partygoers—survivors and family members had to cope not only with the

incredible trauma of the massacre, but the insult of those trying to deny what had happened. The Palestinian Authority took its claim to foreign ministries worldwide, and the UN (no surprises there). Perhaps due to the overwhelming evidence—literally hundreds of videos and photographs taken not only by partygoers, but by the Hamas savages themselves— there are no longer any such formal claims. Predictably the PA then withdrew its claim, stating that it was no longer its ‘official position’. As is becoming regular practise now, as more evidence is revealed that totally debunks Hamas claims, those around the world who have based their condemnation of Israel on such lies simply—quietly—change the figures and move on: No apology, no retraction, no effort whatsoever to address the damage already done. There were some 3500 people attending the Nova Festival on 6/7 October. Around ten percent were slaughtered. The aftermath is unfathomable. Many of the survivors suffered significant physical injuries— many from gunshots. But the psychological damage, the part that is not so easily seen, is impossible to



Photos of Israelis who were murdered by Hamas terrorists at the Nova festival grounds. | Photos: C4INZ



Banners at the Nova Festival grounds.



Posters of festival-goers who were murdered or taken hostage at the Nova Festival grounds.

measure. Young Israelis will be haunted by the effects of this trauma for the rest of their lives. The Nova site has been carefully cleaned by the Zaka teams, the blood-spattered, bullet-holed port-a-loos have been removed. The fridges, tables, tents and speakers are all now gone, taking with them many of the individual stories of the murders that took place around them. What remains is a quiet place. Trees have been planted in memory of each innocent victim of the massacre. There is a board with a map of the site as it was on 7 October. The Genesis story continues with Cain’s guilt-ridden response to God’s question

of his brother’s blood. “Am I my brother’s keeper?” From the far side of the earth, members of the ANZAC Solidarity Mission travelled to visit this site, painfully aware of the blood that cries from the ground. Yes. I am my brother’s keeper. The privilege of walking that ground comes with a responsibility: A responsibility to face a world that is determined to justify the massacre by re-painting it as somehow ‘acceptable’, ‘understandable’ behaviour. It is our job to tell the truth of what happened here.

Why Do They Hate Us?

■ Mandy Worby Christians for Israel Australia

During our ANZAC Solidarity Tour to Israel in March this year, we had several goals;

- To be there with the Jewish people in a time of great trauma and grief.
- Learn the truth to arm ourselves with the facts on the ground to counter the lies being spread around the world.
- Do something practical because we wanted our love and support to have some substance to it.



Ian Worby with Avi Chai, raspberry farmer, who asked why everyone hates them. | Photos: C4I Australia



Our team and Jewish volunteers working inside the raspberry farm.



ANZAC solidarity team being informed by the ZaKa volunteer on what happened to the people inside the shot up and burned out vehicles.



Ian Worby, donating blood to Magen David Adom, along with the rest of the ANZAC Solidarity team.

The practical help we were able to give was in three primary areas. We helped sort through clothing donated to an amazing charity called Eran's Angels in Tel Aviv. This charity receives donated clothing, food, toys, bedding, toiletries, homewares and so much more to help provide for the needs of both soldiers on the front line, and to displaced people (refugees) who've had to leave their homes because of the threats of war on their communities.

We rolled up our sleeves and spent hours sorting through clothing and other goods, so that families and soldiers could have their needs met. It was particularly satisfying to have done something so very practical to help Israelis so dreadfully impacted by the war.

Another practical means of help that the majority of our group participated in was donating blood to Magen David Adom, Israel's emergency services much like our Red Cross and Ambulance Service. We were informed that after making our donations, at least 3 people would be saved within 72 hrs from each donation. So we really did leave a little of ourselves in the Holy Land.

Also, we volunteered a morning to assist on a raspberry farm up in the Golan region, not far from the Syrian border. It was a very rainy, wet morning when we arrived, and we were very grateful to the farmer who provided us with gum boots to protect our shoes.

Half our group went into the open field to prepare for the next seasons planting of raspberries by digging the furrows and laying the volcanic rocks in the bottom for drainage, while the other half of our group went into the large green house to tend the trellis lines for the raspberry plants to grow up. Just so you know...the greenhouses aren't waterproof. It was wet, a bit cold, super muddy and so much fun.

“Why do they hate us so much? We didn't attack anyone, we didn't start a war. Why do they hate us so much?”

Spending time with the farmers and some of the young volunteers who were using a gap year between finishing school and joining the IDF was a great opportunity to share our love with and for them.

Once we'd finished and slowly made our way to have a coffee and a bite to eat with them, I say slowly because our boots were so caked with mud it was really hard to walk...but we did laugh a whole lot.

I was chatting with the main farmer 'Avi' about his farm and also how he was coping since 7 October and he was, understandably, very subdued. He's a religious man who was not immediately aware of the events of 7 October because all his technology was turned off because it was the religious holiday of *Simchat Torah* and it was *Shabbat*. But when he did become aware, he sat stunned, horrified and in overwhelming shock at what was unfolding on his TV screen.

He went on to tell us that he'd just recently returned from reservist duty in Gaza where his task was to collect dead bodies and body parts resulting from the battle. I just looked at him because I didn't know how to respond. What does a person do with that kind of information? He was grieving and traumatised...who wouldn't be?

He took a little time to describe his conflicting feelings, trying to understand how anyone could commit such pointless, hate-inspired evil such as took place on 7 October, but then he asked me a chilling question. “Why do they hate us so much?” And he wasn't talking about Hamas.

Hamas hates Jews because of its radical, demonically-inspired ideology. Everyone knows that. What Avi wanted to know was why the world hates them so much, because no sooner had the atrocities of 7 October been reported, then the world swiftly and virulently turned his hatred upon the victims, blaming them for their own slaughter.

“Why do they hate us so much? We didn't attack anyone, we didn't start a war. Why do they hate us so much?”

You can't answer that with a long theological dissertation on the Biblical and spiritual reason for the conflict between the Jews and the Arabs.

You can't use the rebirth of the State of Israel in 1948 and the relentless campaign of disinformation and the rewriting of history that has infected the hearts and minds of the Arabs in the region for the past 75 years.

You can't even use the radical religious ideology ingrained in generations of Arabs from cradle to grave. You can't use those answers—even if they're credible and demonstrably provable—because even they don't make sense, and those answers only deal with the Muslim/Arab issues.

Why Does the World Hate Israel So Much?

I can only give one answer and it's found in *Psalms 2*. What God loves, the world hates, and the world in its rejection of God will do anything and everything it can to throw off any accountability or responsibility to Him. They conspire among themselves to make war against God thinking they have that kind of power.

Psalms 2 says, “Why are the nations in an uproar, the peoples grumbling in vain? The earth's kings are taking positions, leaders conspiring together, against Adonai and His anointed. They cry, ‘Let's break their fetters!’

Let's throw off their chains!’ He who sits in heaven laughs; Adonai looks at them in derision. Then in His anger He rebukes them, terrifies them in His fury. ‘I Myself have installed my king on Tziyion, My holy mountain. I will proclaim the decree: Adonai said to Me, ‘You are My Son; today I have become Your Father. Ask of Me, and I'll make the nations Your inheritance; the whole wide world will be Your possession. You'll break them with an iron rod, shatter them like a clay pot.’ Therefore, kings, be wise; be warned, you judges of the earth. Serve Adonai with fear; rejoice, but with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish along the way, when suddenly His anger blazes. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him.”

The world hates what God loves, and God loves Israel. He always has and He always will. The world is conspiring together against God, His people and His ways, and while it is putting the Jewish people in a very dangerous and precarious position, the world is pitting itself against God Almighty.

God will fight for His people, of that I have no doubt, and ‘Christians For Israel’ will continue to stand with, comfort and advocate for Israel and the Jewish people.

According to *Psalms 2*, the efforts and machinations of the nations of the world and their plans for the destruction of Israel have not taken God by surprise, in fact He's laughing at them. The world is subject to a warning by God Himself...turn from their scheming and hatred, turn to Him, submit to Him...or they'll be crushed.



Legal Aspects of Possible ICC Arrest Warrants

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

On Monday 20 May 2024, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague, Mr Karim Kahn KC, announced his intention to ask the Court's Pre-Trial Chamber to issue arrest warrants against Israeli leaders including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, as well as Hamas leaders Yahya Sinwar (Head of the Islamic Resistance Movement ('Hamas') in the Gaza Strip), Mohammed Diab Ibrahim Al-Masri, more commonly known as DEIF (Commander-in-Chief of the military wing of Hamas, known as the Al-Qassam Brigades), and Ismail Haniyeh (Head of Hamas Political Bureau), for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Gaza. This has provoked strong reactions. Israeli government and Parliament have condemned the move. The US President called the decision 'outrageous'. Political leaders in the US have threatened to retaliate with sanctions against ICC personnel. The UK Prime Minister called the move 'unhelpful'. Hamas has also rejected the decision. In our view, issuing warrants against Israeli leaders at this time is highly problematic.

ICC Lacks Jurisdiction in Gaza
The ICC's role in relation to the Palestinian-Israel conflict is highly controversial. The Court was established in 2000 to investigate and prosecute individuals for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. It only has powers in relation to states that are parties to the Rome Statute. Many states (including Israel and the USA) are not a party to the Rome Statute. The Palestinians have been trying for decades to engage the Court to prosecute Israeli leaders. In 2021, in a controversial ruling, the Court decided that, even though 'Palestine' is not a state under established principles of international law, the fact that Palestine has obtained 'non-member observer state' status in the UN means that it was entitled to join the Rome Statute, and therefore the Court has jurisdiction to prosecute Israelis for crimes committed on the territory of Palestine (including Gaza). Israel and many other states object that the Court has no powers relating to alleged Israeli crimes on Palestinian territory. In our view, this decision undermines the basic principle underlying the Court, namely that it only has the powers that sovereign states confer on it. Palestine is definitely not (yet) a sovereign state, and Israel is not a party to the Rome Statute—so neither can have conferred any powers on the Court. The ICC simply has no business in Gaza.

Nevertheless, since October 2023, the ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan (a British/Pakistani lawyer) has stated publicly that the ICC is investigating both Israeli and Hamas leaders and will prosecute them if it finds that they are committing crimes.

Even if it is accepted that the Court has jurisdiction, issuing arrest warrants at this time would open the Court to criticism for many reasons.

Politicisation of the Court
The Court is already widely criticised for being ineffective and inefficient. With a multi-million dollar budget and a staff of hundreds, the Court has only managed to achieve a handful of convictions in the last twenty years. Choosing to focus on Israeli leaders will expose the Court to the claim that it has become a political instrument used by Israel's enemies, including the Palestinian leadership, to delegitimise Israel and undermine its lawful military objective to destroy Hamas' capabilities.

If the ICC wants to protect its reputation as an independent and trustworthy tribunal based on the rule of law, it will not take one-sided steps.

Complementarity
The ICC only has power to act if the national court of the alleged criminal is unwilling or unable to investigate and prosecute (the principle of 'complementarity'). Israel has a robust legal system and diligently investigates any alleged crimes or violations of the law. Therefore, it is hoped that the Prosecutor will refrain from issuing any arrest warrant against Israeli nationals unless and until he issues a ruling on the matter of complementarity, which is one of the pillars of the ICC criminal system.

'War Crimes' and 'Crimes Against Humanity'
The ICC was established to ensure an end to impunity for "the most serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole". Israel is exercising its legitimate right of self-defence in Gaza. Inevitably, Israeli leaders and soldiers will make mistakes and maybe even violate international humanitarian law or even commit crimes. Such violations should be addressed and punished where appropriate. But the Court was established to prosecute the worst criminals who deliberately flout the law and commit the most heinous crimes. It is a travesty of justice to isolate Israel for such heinous crimes when it is fighting a massive war against Iran and its proxies and allies in the region.

Evidence of Crimes
Issuing an arrest warrant would mean the Prosecutor believes he has conclusive evidence that crimes have been committed. However, it is impossible to establish that Israel is committing war crimes or other violations of international law. Concerning the crime of genocide, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) recently ruled that it cannot be proved at this time that Israel is committing the crime of genocide. Other war crimes



Israeli PM Netanyahu during a press conference in March 2024. | Photo: Flash90

mentioned in the Rome Statute can only be proven if a Court can examine and reach conclusions on all the facts of specific cases. Legal and military experts remind us that Israel has done more in the past six months to protect Palestinian civilians than any other army has done in the context of complex urban warfare, more remarkable given Israel is fighting an enemy (Hamas) that intentionally violates international law to maximise civilian casualties. The facts are simply not yet available.

An Arrest Warrant at this Stage Would be Counter-Productive
An ICC intervention at this time to brand Israeli leaders as war criminals will also be counter-productive. It will not change Israel's behaviour and may simply embolden Hamas to refuse to release the hostages.

The war in Gaza is at a critical point. Israel is preparing to enter Rafah in southern Gaza to seek to eliminate the remaining Hamas battalions hiding in tunnels under the city. Israel is also engaged in complex negotiations with Hamas for the release of Israeli hostages. Foreign diplomatic officials like US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and the UK's Foreign Secretary David Cameron expressed their hopes last weekend that Hamas would accept Israel's latest 'extraordinarily generous' offer for a hostage deal that would see a 40-day pause in fighting and the release of potentially thousands of Palestinian prisoners in exchange for 33 hostages in an initial phase.

Criminalising the Conflict Feeds Antisemitism
More problematically, criminalising this conflict will inevitably feed into the narrative that Israel and the Jewish people are criminals and thus fuel the flames of antisemitism around the world.

The Hague Initiative for International Cooperation (thinc.) is a global network of international lawyers who challenge the delegitimisation of Israel and promote the fair use of international law. You can support the work of thinc. by making a donation. For more information about thinc.: www.thinc-israel.org

Love in Times of Darkness

■ Anemone Rüger

Christians for Israel

Anna is one of the 1,500 first- and second-generation Holocaust survivors in Ukraine and neighbouring Moldova who are supported by Christians for Israel. Regular aid is provided through the local Jewish communities. With each aid package, the Jewish seniors receive a letter with words of solidarity and encouragement from God's word, and our employees visit them as often as possible. Some tragic personal histories unfold in stages—and sometimes take an unexpected turn.

"We got your letter together with the food parcel," says Anna as we sit down with her. "I've read it so many times... like a prayer!"

Anna lives in a small village with her husband Vladimir in the north of Moldova. The young people have moved away, the middle generation is working abroad—there is hardly any work in this picture-book countryside. Many of the smaller villages look like open-air museums. Anna and Vladimir made their little corner of the world beautiful—tulips and forsythia bloom in their garden.

Fertile Land—Scorched Earth

"My father, Ilya, grew up here in this village," says Anna. "Grandpa was a grain merchant. Many Jews lived here before the war, around 50 families. They worked in agriculture or on the local dairy farm; the women made embroidery."

The fertile black earth soil has always been Moldova's treasure. After the devastating pogrom of Kishinau in 1903, the Zionist movement gained many supporters here in historic Bessarabia. Jewish agricultural settlements sprouted up everywhere—the forerunners of the *kibbutzim*.

"When the war started, Dad had to go to the front," Anna continues. "When he

came back, none of his family was alive. His father, his mother, his brother Avram and his sister Miriam, who had just got married—all murdered. We don't even know exactly where the execution site was. Other Jews from the village were drowned in the well or buried alive."

Antisemitism in a Village Without Jews

After the war, there were hardly any Jews left in the village. And yet antisemitism was a reality that accompanied Anna throughout her childhood. "I was constantly called 'Zhidovka'—the offensive word for 'Jew'. We had a hard time at school, my brother and me. But Vladimir defended me. He still looks after me today."

While Anna fetches the hot water—and all sorts of delicious things that she has prepared for her guests—we take the opportunity to find out a little more from Vladimir.

"Our families were neighbours, we have known each other since we were children," says Vladimir. "Most of the Jews from our village had been murdered in the war. When we started school, Anna was the only Jewish girl in the class. The kids were constantly calling her names and teasing her as Jew. I defended her. I beat up everyone who attacked her."

"I'm not so fit now, but back then, when I was young—they all respected me!" he adds with a mischievous laugh.

Carried on Hands

Halfway through school time they realised they would be in love for life. "We were in sixth or seventh grade when we knew we would get married," says Vladimir. "Anna then changed schools. There were no paved roads in our village. The last stretch of road before school always turned into a pool of mud when it rained. When the



Vladimir was the one who defended Anna against antisemitic hatred at school. Even then, the two knew they were getting married. | Photos: Christians for Israel

weather was bad, I got up early in the morning and took Anna to school. I always carried her the last stretch through the mud so she wouldn't get her feet dirty."

Vladimir later became a veterinarian. His university was 300 kilometres away. "But I had a motorcycle, a Java," Vladimir remembers. "I could come home every weekend on my Java. That was a big event for the village each time! Back then, hardly anyone had their own vehicle. And of course Anna often rode with me. She loved it! Right, Anna?"

"Of course I rode with you on the motorcycle, and of course I enjoyed it," says Anna with a shy smile as she serves some delicious home-made treats. Anna, too, would have liked to study. But because of her Jewish background, she was not admitted to university in then Soviet Moldova.

She spends a long time looking at the greeting card we brought her, which quotes from the prophet Isaiah that she will be like a beautiful crown in the hand of her God.

Anna is now supported "because of her Jewish origins" and is able to share her story with the people who love her.

You can support first- or second-generation Holocaust survivors in Ukraine and Moldova through Christians for Israel. Our workers on the ground make sure that the help arrives and that the message of love is conveyed during personal visits.



Anna's parents. When Anna's father returned from the front to his hometown, where Anna now lives, none of his family were still alive. All the Jews in the village had been killed.



Many Moldovan villages resemble open-air museums: picturesque but deserted.



Anna sets the table for her guests.

Story of Jews in Muslim Lands—South—Part 2

■ Joanna Moss

As Jews returned to Israel beginning in the 1880s, so too did the Jews in these Muslim lands find a seismic shift was occurring in their ability to stay in their homelands. Some left in stages, and others in mass groups. Danger was associated with leaving, but it was dangerous to stay too. The advent of the state of Israel and the Six-Day War were the last straws for many countries, and the remaining Jews were mostly persecuted or forcibly exiled. The story of the Jews in each of these Muslim countries is radically different. Few Jews remain today, along with discarded synagogues and a vanished way of life.

Factors

Before we look at the individual nations' stories, there are a number of factors to consider that have shaped each community, such as the size of the community numerically and proportionally, how prosperous, isolated or integrated they were, the gentiles' attitudes to the Jews as well as the dispensable/indispensable role the Jews played in the larger society. What makes the Jews in Muslim lands so different from European Jewry is the length they have lived in their respective lands and that they always existed as a minority in status terms. Under Islam, they were given *dhimmi* status, some paying a special *dhimmi* tax. Jews had a 'minority mindset' where preserving the religion, culture and distinctiveness were deemed important. Assimilation into Islamic society was never on the cards.

They were generally neither desirous of integration, as many European Jews were, nor hungering after universal suffrage. In many cases, they had limited political power, but a few enjoyed a great deal of power and wealth. Yet when these Jews arrived in Israel, they embraced democracy and created a distinctive conservative political force anchored in the Likud party. They had to leave behind their 'minority mindset' and become part of the majority in Israel, but it took time. Few were able to take many possessions when they left, often at short notice. Many could not return to their homelands for a visit for fear of death. Most Muslim nations don't even recognise Israel, as part of the 1967 Arab League's Khartoum resolution called the *Three No's*. Now, as the Abraham Accords have reshaped the region, tourism is more permissible in some countries but not others.

Jews leaving had a choice: to go into the diaspora and remain a minority or to go to Israel, the ancient homeland where they would be in a majority. Some Jews joined established communities elsewhere in the world making it easier to transition. Sometimes, this choice was economic, and those with less means ended up in Israel. When they arrived in Israel, they were often traumatised and bereft of all that they had left behind. It's not easy to leave behind a community of thousands of years of history for a new way of life. For the displaced Jews from Europe, their world had disappeared. There was nothing to go back to. For Jews from Muslims lands, their world still existed, but they were no longer a part of it. It took time to pick up the pieces, to re-establish themselves and find their niches in society. They were entering an Israel that had been established with European foundations by predominantly Ashkenazi Jews, a world unfamiliar to the Jews from Muslim lands. But they had two things



Classic Yemeni cuisine on Sabbath—Jewish Holiday. | Photo: Shutterstock

in their favour: they were used to the climate and ate traditional foods that were more suited to the environment, and many spoke Arabic fluently, which proved very useful.

South of Israel are the lands of Saudi Arabia, Yemen (including Aden), Oman, Djibouti, Eritrea, the Gulf States, and Egypt, all nations bordering seas.

Aden

Aden was previously the capital of South Yemen until it combined with North Yemen to form one nation in 1990. The British controlled Aden, a strategic port city, from 1839-1967. The 1869 opening of the Suez Canal enhanced its strategic importance. Rioting began in the 1930s. In 1947, more than 80 Jews were killed as part of the Aden riots (post Res 181), in which their property was looted and schools burned down. The future of the Jews looked grim, and the British were unable to protect them. Nor did the ensuing court cases bring justice. From 1947-67, most Jews left for Israel.

Yemen

Yemenite Jews have an ancient history, and some can even trace their tribal lineage. Historically, they were very religious. Much of the Jewish learning was passed down orally and so the language was preserved. This is why Yemeni Hebrew is regarded as being 'pure'. This aspect has made a huge contribution to the authentic sound of Modern Hebrew. Yemeni boys began Jewish education from three years old. Memorisation and recitation were key features. Women were also included in a limited way, only for *kashrut* (Kosher rules) and purity reasons. Visually, the elaborate wedding outfits that Yemeni Jews wear are famous. In the 1970s, the importance of culture, wedding customs and dress was revisited so that they wouldn't be lost. Many Israeli Yemeni Jews were agricultural labourers (1920-50) preparing land for tree planting. Gadera has a 50% Yemenite population. Music was also key. Food-wise, they brought Malawach, Jachrun and Kubaneh bread to Israel. These are their legacies.

There have been several waves of Aliyah from Yemen starting in 1881, when 14% of the population left for Israel. *Operation Magic Carpet* (June 1949-Sept 1950), organised by the American Joint Committee, brought 50,000 impoverished Jews from Yemen, Aden, Saudi

Arabia and Eritrea to Israel. A smaller exodus happened 1950-62. Since then it has been small groups leaving, often in clandestine circumstances.

Bahrain

The only Jewish community remaining on the Arabian Peninsula lies in Bahrain. It is an ancient community that generally has good relationships with Muslim citizens but is tiny. Jews play an active role in both the government and civil life.

Egypt

Although Egypt is mostly west of Israel, a portion of it lies to the south. It is a special case as it is not really part of the traditional Maghrebi story of the western North African nations. Obviously, the story of Jews in Egypt goes back to biblical times, but our focus is more on the 19th–21st centuries. The traditional community is comprised of Karaite and Rabbanite Jews based in Cairo and Alexander. Interestingly, Ashkenazi Jews arrived in Egypt following European pogroms, making up 10% of the Jewish population, as did Jews fleeing Ottoman Palestine military service during WWI. Sephardi Jews also arrived. Such was the prosperity pre-1947 that many Jews left Palestine for Egypt! In 1948, the community numbered 80,000+. It was comprised of 10% Very Rich, 60% Middle Class and 30% Poor, reflecting social mobility and the integration within the growing Egyptian economy. Jews flourished under British rule (1886-1956). They were involved in the service sector, industry and infrastructure. The pogroms beginning in the 1940s, culminating in the 1950 exodus (Arab-Israeli war 1948-52), saw 57,500 leave. Next came the Suez Crisis (1956), when Jews were declared enemies of the state. Economic and legal measures were used to displace Jews and seize assets. Many left with one small suitcase and a little cash, leaving behind large fortunes. In 1967, men were thrown out of the country or put in camps, so 35,000 went to Israel. Others went to France and the USA. The synagogues remain today but with only about 100 Jews left. Egyptian Jews were able to use their modern skills and global contacts to integrate into Israeli society, especially linguistic skills, and were successful in Israel financially and in social status terms. Their legacy is integration and prosperity.

Thank God We Made Aliyah

■ Sondra Oster Baras

International President of CFOIC
Heartland

For weeks, we have been hearing about the terrible riots on university campuses in the US. Students, fueled by an irrational hatred of Israel, are accusing Israel of genocide against the Arabs of Gaza while they themselves call for the genocide of the Jews of Israel. The infamous slogan, “*From the River to the Sea, Palestine Shall Be Free*”, is a direct call for the removal of all Jews from any part of the Land of Israel.

Not content with aiming their slogans and statements at the Jews of Israel, many Jewish and Israeli students have been attacked both verbally and physically. Shai Davidai, a professor at the Columbia University Business School, warned Jewish and Israeli students that they were not safe, that the administration that he works for was not protecting them. The rabbi of the campus issued a warning to all Jewish students at Columbia just before *Passover*, urging them to go home and not return to campus.

Columbia University was indeed the first to open its doors to radical protestors, who set up an encampment in the centre of the campus. Rather than call upon security officers to evacuate the violent protestors immediately, the university engaged them in conversation. Nothing was accomplished. Only after the students took over one of the campus buildings, causing damage to property, did the university call in the local police to evacuate the building. In the meantime, similar demonstrations spread to campuses across the country, from New York to California.

As an Israeli, I was horrified to see the terrifying rise in antisemitism in a country that is considered one of Israel's most important ally. As someone who was born and raised in the United States, I was ashamed at what this wonderful



Sondra Oster Baras in her Columbia University dorm room.



Sondra and Ed Baras with a few of their children and grandchildren enjoying an Israeli nature reserve. | Photos: Sondra Oster Baras

country has become. But I am particularly horrified at what has happened to Columbia University, a campus that was my home for three years and where I studied for six years, earning a Bachelor's Degree in History and English literature and, afterwards, a Law degree.

I first came to Columbia in September 1976 after having spent a year studying the Bible in Jerusalem. I loved my year in Israel and was determined to make *Aliyah*, to make my final home in Israel. But before that, I wanted to study at Columbia, a university with a wonderful reputation for scholastic achievement. I had grown up in a fairly sheltered environment, having been educated from primary school through high school in an Orthodox Jewish school. Columbia was my first foray into a larger, secular world. I had specifically chosen Columbia, however, because of its warm, welcoming environment for religious Jews. There were Jewish activities on campus, including *Shabbat* services and festive meals. A significant number of Jews walked around campus with a *Kippa*, a knitted skullcap worn by Orthodox men. There was a campus Zionist organisation, which I ended up running for one year. And the *Shabbat* programme was directed by Ed Baras, the man who would become my husband. At Columbia, we received an outstanding academic education and were able to create a wonderful Jewish student community.

How Did Everything Change?

We have all seen the dangerous rise in progressive ideologies, which have corrupted lofty liberal ideals and turned them on their head. In the name of protecting minorities from discrimination, the David has become the Goliath. The irony, of course, is that Jews were long discriminated against in the US for their minority status, and

their entrance to Columbia and similar universities was severely limited until the 1960s. Then, when Jews were finally recognised as equal citizens, they were shortly thereafter turned into white colonial oppressors. The Arabs have become the persecuted minority, even though their numbers and their economic power far exceed those of most ethnic groups in the world! The result—the Arabs could do no wrong, and the Jews could do no right.

Video footage from the massacre on 7 October could not dent this narrative. The Arabs were believed, and the Jews were spurned. And somewhere along the way, the moral compass of the intellectual elite of the US (and of many other countries) disappeared.

The Jews of America face a difficult challenge. They are experiencing hatred and persecution like never before in that country. As an Israeli, I call out to my American brothers and sisters and urge them to make *aliyah* as I did, to join the one Jewish country where they will always be welcomed as their true home. But many of these same Jews look at our lives in Israel, attacked by murderous terrorists on 7 October, attacked by more than 300 Iranian missiles on a single Saturday night, attacked daily by Hezbollah terrorists in the north, attacked by terrorists in Judea and Samaria. And they ask us—can you really tell me that you are safer than we are?

This is my answer. Yes, we face terrible threats from vicious enemies on all sides. But in Israel, we can defend ourselves. We are not dependent upon a university president to call in the police when she herself is a Muslim who sympathises with the anti-Israel bias. We do not have to argue for our place in our own land, repudiating the ridiculous slogan “*From the River to the Sea*”. Yes, things are

difficult in Israel. But this is home. Here, we are responsible for our own fate. We are not passive. We can act.

As I reflect on what my life would have looked like had I stayed in the US and sent my children to Columbia, I look at the life my husband and I built for our children here in Judea and Samaria. Yes, we are surrounded by hostile Arabs, but our children serve in the IDF, and our young men are part of the emergency teams protecting our communities. We may not always have enough funds for all the equipment we need, and for that, we are eternally grateful for the support you have given us. You have partnered with us to take an active role in protecting the Jewish people. We are not hiding in campus dorms, waiting for the violence to subside. We are taking action. And with God's help and protection, we will prevail, here in the Land of Israel.

Sondra Oster Baras is the Founder and International President of CFOIC Heartland, representing the Jewish communities in Judea and Samaria to Christians all over the world. To support the urgent needs of the people of Judea and Samaria, during this terrible war, please use the coupon on the back page and select CFOIC (Christian Friends of Israeli Communities).



Ed Baras together with a friend, proudly celebrating their graduation from Columbia. Both men have *kippas* under their graduation caps.

Believing Without Israel

No More Distinction Between Jew and Greek—Part II

■ **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.

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul says: “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise.” (*Galatians 3:26-29*).

From the perspective of replacement or enlargement theology, this passage is also often referred to. It no longer matters whether you are Jew or Greek (Gentile). What matters is being baptised into Christ. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring. When you read this, it sounds like we as believers in Christ are the offspring of Abraham, taken over from the Jewish people. In other words, no longer the Jews, but Christians, have become the offspring of Abraham, the new Israel. On first sight, that sounds very plausible. But if we read this passage again carefully and reflect on it, we come to different conclusions.

Man and Wife, Slave and Free
First of all, it would be remarkable if Paul were to claim here the opposite of what he says in his letter to the Romans. Then the Bible would become a book of contradictions. which would be confusing and detract from the Bible’s authority as Holy Scripture, God’s revealed Word. If there would no longer be any difference between Jew and Greek, why does Paul write so extensively about the ongoing position of the Jewish people in all other letters? Why all this attention

if they no longer matter?
Paul similarly says that whether you are male or female no longer matters. Yet in other letters, Paul speaks at considerable length about the role of women in the church and the role of husband and wife in marriage. Why does he do that if man and woman no longer matter? Paul similarly says that whether you are slave or free no longer matters. Yet in the letter to Philemon, he speaks of how he sends Onesimus back to his master Philemon as a slave, asking him to receive Onesimus back as a beloved brother. And in his letter to the Ephesians, he exhorts slaves to be obedient to their lords “with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of heart”. And the masters, in turn, should treat their slaves well and “give up threatening” (*Ephesians 6*).

No Need to Become a Jew First
Why would Paul still say these things if it no longer matters whether you are slave or free anyway? We need to read this passage carefully and discover what Paul really intends to say. Literally it says: “There is not Jew and not Greek...” In other words, it no longer matters whether you are Jew or Greek. And in what respect does it no longer matter? To believe in Christ, to be baptised in Him and clothed with Him. In other words, you no longer have to become a Jew first with all the rules, commandments and customs that belong to that, but you may now as a Gentile accept Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Redeemer, believe in Him, be baptised in His Name and clothe your whole life with Him. You may come to God as a Gentile in Jesus Christ without first becoming a Jew. In the letter to Galatians, Paul vigorously counters those in the church who believe that Gentile believers must first become Jews and live Jewish lives, including circumcision, kosher food, etc. Paul emphasises that only faith in Christ and devotion with one’s whole life to Him is sufficient. Man does not have to contribute anything of



| Photo: Shutterstock

his own as a kind of supplement to the grace in Jesus Christ. So it no longer matters whether you are Jew or Greek in order to believe in Jesus Christ and receive eternal life. Of course, there will remain Jews and Gentiles. Just as there simply remain men and women, and likewise slaves and freemen in the Greek and Roman society of the time. Nothing has changed with this statement by Paul in the specific position and uniqueness of Jews, men, women and slaves. Similarly, nothing has changed in Israel’s position in God’s plan of salvation.

Offspring of Abraham
Paul ends this passage by saying that when we are in Christ, we are the offspring of Abraham and heirs according to the promise. Does he mean that as Christians we have now suddenly become the biological and genealogical offspring of Abraham? That would mean that all Christians have become Jews, distant descendants of Abraham as the consequence of being ‘offspring’. Clearly, he could never have meant it that way. So what does he mean? He explains it in *Romans 4*. When Abram was called by God and promised a son despite his

advanced age, Abram took God at His word. That faith was counted to him as righteousness, even before circumcision was instituted as a covenant sign. He thus could become a father of all believers: “So that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them” (*Romans 4:11*). By faith, we too, as Gentiles, are credited with the righteousness of God. This does not mean that we become physical and biological descendants of Abraham, but we are adopted as children and heirs in a spiritual sense. So we may together share with the Jewish people in the blessings of the covenant with Abraham. Again, this passage does not mean that we take over the position of Israel. Nor does it mean that all covenants and promises with the Jewish people have come to an end. On the contrary, we may share in the blessings of God’s eternal covenant with Israel through faith in Jesus. In this sense, therefore, we have become co-heirs. We do not merge with Israel, nor does Israel join the Christian church, but we may share in the blessings.

Signs of Faith
By Kees de Vreugd

Yad

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

The word *yad* means hand. However, a *yad* is also a pointer used when reading the *Torah* scroll. Of course, a *yad* is always beautifully designed as a pointing hand, usually in silver.

The *Torah* is read in the synagogue not only every *Sabbath* but also on Mondays and Thursdays. The five books of Moses are divided into 54 parts, one for each *Sabbath* so that in a year, the entire *Torah* is read. The public reading and explanation on

Mondays and Thursdays (traditionally market days) was instituted by Ezra the Scribe, according to Jewish tradition.

The reading in the synagogue is done by a trained reader. Each weekly section in turn is divided into seven paragraphs. Before each paragraph, someone from the congregation is called to recite the blessing over reading the *Torah*, after which the reader continues. In doing so, he uses the *yad* to tutor himself. Why can’t he just hold his own finger to the text?

The text of the *Torah* is read from a scroll—in Hebrew: *Sefer-Torah*. Such a scroll is made of parchment, made from the skin of a kosher animal. The ink is made according to a special recipe.

The *Torah* is God’s Word that He revealed to Moses on Sinai. So, the text is holy, but it also makes the scroll holy. That is why you are not allowed to touch it with your hands. The classic Hebrew expression for this is (curiously enough) that the *Torah* scroll ‘defiles the hands’ (and not the other way around: the hands defile the scroll). You may only hold the scroll by the two sticks on which it is rolled. To prevent any touching, a cloak is also hung around the scroll when it is put away.



Recommended Reading

Foundational Reasons Behind the Conflict in the Land of Israel

by Kelvin Crombie

The massacre of 7 October 2023 deeply impacted those of us with a heart for Israel and the Jewish people. Having lived in Israel for some 25 years it hit my wife and I deeply. For my three older daughters, it struck even harder, as they were ‘Sabra’ Gentile Israelis, having all been born and grown up there. My youngest daughter, was also deeply affected as she was, and still is, living there and working at Christ Church in Jerusalem.

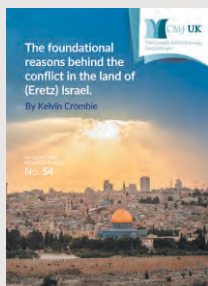
Over the following days, we heard comments from people involved with our church, which were troubling, mostly because it revealed a serious lack of understanding of the big picture. It became progressively apparent that this lack of understanding of the bigger picture, of the broader dynamics of the conflict, was precipitating a negative attitude towards Israel and Jewish people.

A week after the massacre/pogrom, I was on a flight from Sydney to LA to begin a speaking tour of the US. There was no way my mind could rest, so as soon as the meal ended, I took out my laptop—and before touchdown in LA, the first draft of *Foundational Reasons for the Conflict in the Land of Israel* was completed.

The purpose of the booklet is not to present all the data relating to 7 October and subsequent events but to provide some foundational understanding and to help Christians and others become familiar with the spiritual dynamics of the conflict—as it is a spiritual conflict at the highest level. It is a battle related to the culmination of Almighty God’s worldwide plan of redemption and for the integrity and character of Almighty God. If Israel and the Jewish people can be destroyed and or discredited, then this reflects upon the integrity of Almighty God, who has entered into a covenant with Abraham and given promises relating to the people and land of Israel.

The booklet does not set out to answer all questions nor provide all information. Hopefully, however it does help join some of the dots relating to the bigger picture of Almighty God’s great master plan of worldwide redemption—and believe me, it was quite a challenge putting this into just 50 or so pages!

The booklet can be obtained from Kelvin Crombie, email: kelvin@heritageresources.com.au or Heritage Resources, PO Box 565, Mundaring WA 6073, Australia



To Provoke Them to Jealousy

■ Johannes Gerloff

Theologian, Journalist, Lecturer & Author

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

Provoking Israel to jealousy is the task of the whole body of Messiah (*Romans 10:14-19*).

There is only one way to salvation. This was the starting point of Paul’s train of thought: Only the person “who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (*Romans 10:13*). On this foundation, he built the logical chain of ‘to call upon’—‘to believe’—‘to hear’—‘to preach’—‘to be sent’.

Under normal circumstances, faith is generated through the act of listening with understanding to the words of the preachers that were sent. But with Israel, it is different. Israel heard but still did not understand.

Instead of blaming the Jewish people for their disbelief, Paul stated: “They were not able to believe, because Isaiah said again (*Isaiah 6:9-10*): ‘He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart so that they should not see with their eyes nor understand with their heart, and return and be healed’”.

Without going into detail, by quoting Isaiah, the apostle points out that the Lord himself blinded the Jewish people—a fact that is significant in God’s history of salvation. They could not believe—even if they would have wished to do so!

Challenging Israel to jealousy was and is the most fundamental calling of the Gentile Church for Israel.

Therefore, God used a means that they should actually understand: In the same way, they provoked Him through a non-god, the Lord says, “I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people”. And, as they made Him furious through their idolatry, “I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation” (*Deuteronomy 32:21*). God appoints a ‘non-people’, a ‘not understanding people’, people who are not gifted in the same way as God’s people of Israel are, in order to provoke His chosen people to jealousy.

In the next chapter, Paul emphatically repeats the following statement, which is crucial to his theology regarding Israel:

“To you, the Gentiles, I say: Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentile nations I praise my ministry in order to somehow arouse my blood-relatives to jealousy [through my evangelising the Gentiles]



Mishkenot Shaananim— an old area of Jerusalem in the evening. | Photo: Shutterstock

and [thus] save some of them.” (*Romans 11:13-14*)

He did not name his or God’s love for the non-Jews as the reason for being proud of his calling. “Paul praises his apostolate for the nations [also] not for its own sake, not because his evangelistic effort among the nations is remarkable and ever more churches are being planted. Rather, he praises his mission in view of possible indirect effects it might have on his own countrymen”. The theologian Wengst puts it as follows:

“The mission to the Gentiles in general, as well as his own calling to the nations in particular, are not sufficient in

in order to provoke them [i.e. Israel] to jealousy”. This is the very reason for the calling of the Gentile nations: That Israel may become jealous and emulate them and in the come to saving faith.

Of course, we as Gentiles are delivered from evil, and God has “predestined us unto the status of children” “to the praise of the glory of His grace” (*Ephesians 1:5-6*). Of course, we have “heard the word of truth,” have become believers, been sealed with the Holy Spirit, become his “purchased possession”, and have “obtained an inheritance,” “that we should be a praise of His glory” (*Ephesians 1:11-14*). God’s glory is and always will remain the final goal of God’s salvation history with this world.

If, however, we want to talk about the inner-worldly function of the Church, then we should remember: We have not been saved in order to become missionaries or evangelists. We, as non-Jews, were not saved primarily to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth through social welfare work. All of this is unquestionably part of the Church’s calling and should in no way be considered any less important. But according to the Apostle Paul, salvation through Jesus Christ has come to the Gentiles for the primary purpose of making Israel jealous.

“To preach” is an exclusive task reserved solely for those who are ‘sent’ by God. Provoking Israel to jealousy, however, is the task of the whole body of Messiah. There are no Christians who are not called, who were not redeemed for the very purpose of making the Jewish people jealous.

Challenging Israel to jealousy was and is the most fundamental calling of the Gentile Church for Israel.

themselves—so that Israel might be forgotten in light of their great success [among the Gentiles]. Rather, they happen within Israel’s ‘horizon’ and thus remain permanently related to Israel”.

So, the apostle to the Gentiles had Israel’s salvation in mind while spreading the gospel among the Gentiles. The Jewish people were the goal and purpose of his task, even though he could not do anything directly for the salvation of his fellow Jews.

Schlatter says: “When he created the Gentile churches, in whom Jesus reveals himself completely in His wonderful salvation, he also provided Israel with evidence of Christ, which should be a powerful provocation for them to believe”. According to Paul, evangelising Gentiles is the most effective form of Jewish evangelism.

Paul concludes correctly in *Romans 11:11* that salvation “has come to the Gentiles,

Israel at War: Is This Gog & Magog?

■ Kameel Majdali

Director | Teach All Nations Inc.

The fire and fury of the Middle East war and unprecedented global attention provoked many to wonder: Is this the prelude to *Ezekiel 38-39*? Apart from Armageddon (*Zechariah 14*; *Revelation 16:16*), the Ezekiel prophecy is the best-known of the major end-time events.

Gog & Magog

Summary: The Gog and Magog campaign is a massive, spontaneous, latter-day invasion of Israel by a coalition of nations led by a great power from the north. Israel will be at peace, unsuspecting, and unprepared. This unexpected invasion is so overwhelming that, humanly speaking, the Jewish state cannot survive. Yet, at the eleventh hour, God Himself intervenes, annihilates Gog and its allies, and Israel is saved.

Here are some details (all references are from Ezekiel):

Who's Gog: Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal (*38:1*)

Main Allies: Persia (Iran), Cush (Ethiopia or Sudan or Eritrea), and Phut (*Libya—38:5*)

Secondary Allies: Gomer, the house of Togarmah (Turkey?) and many people with them (*38:6*)

Timing: In the latter or last days; after 'many days you will be visited' (*38:8, 17*). There is disagreement about where the Gog campaign fits in the prophetic calendar: before, during, or after the tribulation or after the Millennium (*Revelation 20:7-10*). We need to watch and pray (*Matthew 26:41*).

"I have seen a vision. I saw in this vision a great war that encompasses the world. I saw this war recess and then start again, actually being two wars..."

Target of the Invasion: The people of Israel living in the land of Israel. Israelites are gathered out of many nations, on the once barren mountains of Israel but now dwelling in safety (*38:8*). Israel would be 'living in peace.' Do the October 2020 Abraham (Peace) Accords with Israel with four Arab nations point in that direction? Or does the menace of antagonists like Iran and its proxies prevent 'safe living,' thus deferring the Magog invasion?

Reason for the Invasion: Spoil will be seized, plunder carried off, livestock and goods confiscated (*38:12*). Will Israel's natural gas reserves in the Mediterranean Sea be part of the booty?

God's Response: God goes against Gog



Illustration of Gog & Magog. | Photo: Adobe Stock Images

and his allies, sends fire from heaven, and destroys the coalition (*39:1-6*); it takes seven months to bury the dead (*39:12*). Ultimately, it is God who draws out Gog and company to battle and destroys them. When this happens, the nations will glorify the name of the Lord (*38:16*).

Israel's aftermath: Instead of being destroyed, Israel will experience the final ingathering of the exiles (*39:27-28*). Furthermore, the Holy Spirit will be poured out upon them (*37:14*; *39:29*).

Who is Gog?

This is the million-dollar question: we need to identify the key player. Magog, in all probability, means 'from the land of Gog.' So, let's focus on Gog himself, the main character. Who is he? The normal interpretation is Russia. Why?

Because it is a great power from the North (*38:15*). Russia's long thousand-year history, which reputedly began in Kiev before gravitating towards Moscow, has incorporated an empire larger than any except the Mongols and Muslims.

Most commentators nominate Russia as Gog. The old Soviet Union was a tailor-made villain for this title—until it collapsed on Christmas Day 1991. Also, some teachers say 'Mesech' equals Moscow and 'Tubal' is Tobolsk. But is this the case?

This author is not completely convinced that Russia equals Gog. The main verse, *Ezekiel 38:15*, says Gog comes from *Tzafone Yereka*. *Tzafone* is 'north', so the adjective *yereka* is a keyword. In Strong's Concordance, H3411 is translated *yereka*

as side (21x), coasts (3x), parts (2x), border (1x), and quarters (1x).¹ ESV translates *tzaphone yereka* as 'uttermost parts of the north' but KJV translates it as 'north parts.' Other modern translations speak of 'far north.' In any case, the notion that Ezekiel is saying the furthest north is debatable, and leaves open another possibility for Gog.

While Russia has been an imperialistic power in the past, and some would argue it still is, it has also been a Christian nation for a thousand years.

In 1889 Hudson Taylor (1832-1905), a British missionary to China, gave a memorable prophecy about Russia in the last days.

"I have seen a vision. I saw in this vision a great war that encompasses the world. I saw this war recess and then start again, actually being two wars. After this, I saw much unrest and revolts that will affect many nations. I saw in some places spiritual awakenings. In Russia, I saw there will come a general all-encompassing, national **spiritual awakening** so great that there could never be another like it. From Russia, I saw the awakening spread to many European countries. Then, I saw an all-out awakening, followed by the coming of Christ."

Another consideration: could Gog be Turkey, which is also north of Israel? The key is the place names written in Scripture, such as *Gomer* and *Togarmah*, could be in Turkey. Likewise, 'Mesech' and 'Tubal' may not be 'Moscow' and 'Tobolsk' after all.

In any case, let's have open minds, reject dogmatism, have hearts of grace, and be open for the Holy Spirit to give clarity. Next time, we will look at *Zechariah 12-14*.

¹Ezekiel 38 (ESV)—The word of the Lord. Blue Letter Bible. Accessed 3 Mar, 2022. tterible.org/esv/eze/38/1/5_840001

Biblical Roots

By David Nekrutman

Can I Get an Amen?

In my travels and talks in non-denominational churches, I often hear pastors use the expression, "Can I get an Amen" in their messages. In return, the congregation would respond with a thundering affirmation—"Amen." Indeed, Amen is a powerful word; however, its biblical introduction in the *Five Books of Moses* would make it an expression least likely to be used in corporate and free-flowing prayer.

In *Numbers 5*, we encounter the word Amen when a husband accuses his wife of adultery. To prove her innocence, she must drink the 'bitter water.' Prior to ingesting the potion, the accused must say Amen to the priest's oath. The Amen acts as a legal functionary, whereby the oath becomes hers.

The second time we confront Amen is when Israelites respond to the curses pronounced at Mount Ebal in *Deuteronomy 27*. This Amen functions as one who signs off that he or she read the fine print and is still willing to sign up.

The usage of Amen by the early church went from being part of a blessing/prayer (*1 Corinthians 14:16*) to an expression of hope and as a worshipful term for Jesus (*Revelation 3:14*), exalting him as "The Amen, the faithful and true witness." However, Judaism employed Amen as a way to fulfil one's prayer obligations when hearing the congregational leader reciting the liturgy.

With such negative associations related to Amen in the *Five Books of Moses*, how did it end up as the most popular word in faith? In *1 Chronicles 16:36*, Amen was used to praise God and acknowledge His sovereignty in the world when the Ark was placed in the Tabernacle during King David's time. Amen is also mentioned in the *Book of Psalms* in praising God's authority and protection (*41:14*; *72:19*; *89:53* and *106:48*).

While the Hebrew root of Amen is *emunah* (faith), Jewish commentators view the word as a three-letter acronym—*El melekh ne'eman* (God is faithful king). The Amen response to praises and affirmation of God is based upon the concept of sociality of blessing. Just as two witnesses are required to make any legal proceeding effective, so too when one blesses God and the other responds Amen, they are both authenticating it.

Amen is the way a society can officially endorse an act of worship, give it status and importance. We need partners to glorify God in the world. Belief in God is more than knowing He exists. Biblical faith requires knowing God's trustworthiness. Can I get an Amen?

Iran Attacks—God Protects

■ Rev Willem JJ Glashouwer

President | Christians for Israel International

“Had it not been the Lord who was on our side,”

Let Israel say,

“Had it not been the Lord who was on our side

When people rose up against us,

Then they would have swallowed us alive,

When their anger was kindled against us;

Then the waters would have flooded over us,

The stream would have swept over our souls;

Then the raging waters would have swept over our souls.”

“Blessed be the Lord,

Who has not given us to be torn by their teeth.

Our souls have escaped like a bird from the trapper’s snare;

The snare is broken and we have escaped.

Our help is in the Name of the Lord,

Who made heaven and earth.” Psalm 124 (NASB)

Suddenly, it happened. Rocket sirens and explosions were heard across Israel early Sunday morning, 14 April, after Iran launched a massive, wide-scale aerial assault that threatened to push the Middle East to the brink of a regional war.

Israel’s military intercepted the ‘vast majority’ of more than 300 Iranian attack drones and cruise missiles alongside the US military and Britain’s Defense Ministry that shot down drones headed for the Jewish state.

The attacks shocked people around the world as it was the first time the Islamic regime of Iran had ever directly attacked Israel. The regime typically chooses to target the Jewish state using its terrorist proxy groups, like Hezbollah and Hamas.

How do we look at this from a Biblical and Prophetic Perspective?

First of all, we saw a modern-day miracle happen. Only one Bedouin girl was wounded, and almost no collateral damage. The seven-year-old girl Amina



The remains of a rocket fired from Iran at the Dead Sea. | Photo: Flash90

remains in pediatric intensive care, and hopefully, she will recover. We saw the reality of the God of Israel protecting His Land, His City of Jerusalem and His people—as stated in *Psalm 124*, quoted above.

Many people in Israel also realised the truth of *Psalm 44:1-8*: “We have heard it with our ears, O God; our ancestors have told us what You did in their days, in days long ago. With Your hand, You drove out the nations and planted our ancestors; You crushed these peoples and made our ancestors flourish. It was not by their sword that they won the land, nor did their arm bring them victory; it was Your right hand, Your arm, and the light of Your face, for You loved them.”

“You are my King and my God, who decrees victories for Jacob. Through You, we push back our enemies; through Your Name, we trample our foes. I put no trust in my bow, my sword does not bring me victory, but You give us victory over our enemies, You put our adversaries to shame. In God, we make our boast all

day long, and we will praise Your name forever.”

Fulfilment of Ezekiel 38-39

There have been many speculations about this attack by Iran being the beginning of the fulfilment of the prophecies of *Ezekiel 38-39*. Some view the current developments as a prelude to the End of Times.

Yes, one day, the prophecies of *Ezekiel 38-39* will be fulfilled along with many more yet unfulfilled Biblical prophecies about wars coming to the Middle East. What is amazing is that it doesn’t matter how powerful these nations get or how much of a threat they become to Israel, God promised through the prophet Ezekiel that when in time the Islamic world becomes an existential threat to Israel, where Israel’s IDF, as powerful as it is, can’t hold its enemies at bay, then God Himself will step back into history. *Ezekiel 38-39* foretells how God will send down fire upon the Gog-Magog invaders. Iran, Russia, Turkey’s armies, and all the others will all turn on each other and then be swallowed up by devastating earthquakes. God will then send fire back on those nations to destroy them so that only a ninth of their people are left alive. When a nation comes against Israel, expect the wrath of God.

But also yes, one day Jesus will come, His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, and He will fulfil the promise given by the angel Gabriel to His mother Mary in *Luke 1:32-33*: “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, He will reign over the house of Jacob [= Israel] forever, and His kingdom will have no end.”

Finally, the prophecy of *Isaiah 2:2-4* will be fulfilled. Then peace all over the world shall be flowing from Jerusalem, and the nations shall train for war no more.

When will that be? Jesus, the risen Lord, says in *Acts 1:6-8*—when asked this question by His disciples: “Lord, are You at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Facts Speak

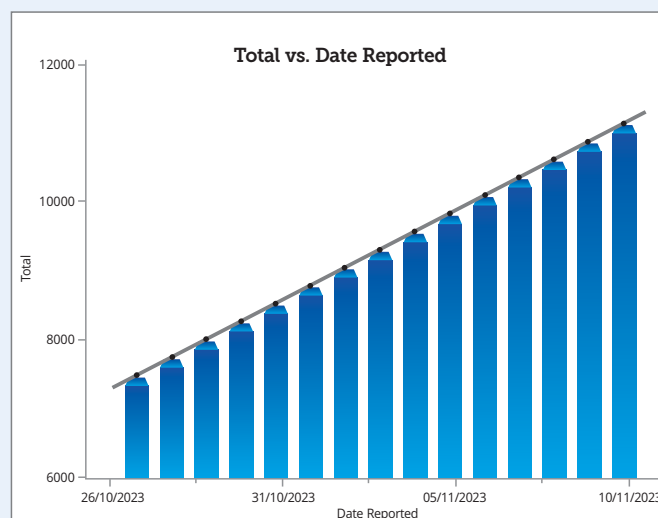
Fake Casualty Numbers

The Ministry of Health in Gaza, run by Hamas, reports that some 30,000 Gazans have now died in the war, the majority of whom are women and children. Yet these are not credible casualty numbers. The poorly fabricated figures show this.

The most obvious: this diagram shows the number of dead by date. Those numbers run in a perfect straight line. This linearity cannot be real. There must be variation by day, even according to the laws of statistics there should be much more variation.

Also, the difference in the number of casualties among women and children should be greater, depending on what was hit that day and how heavily the bombings were. Were tunnels hit or residential buildings? In addition, there should be coherence between the numbers of women and children killed. If there were relatively many women killed in one day, then there should also be many children killed. However, the figures provided by Hamas lack any such logic. And this does sound like Hamas: facts that are convenient you just make up yourself—on paper.

The graph reveals an extremely regular increase in casualties over the period. Data aggregated by Abraham Wyner and provided by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), based on Gaza MoH figures. Want to learn about the research of Professor Wyner, go to: <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/how-gaza-health-ministry-fakes-casualty-numbers>



The Roots of Pentecost

■ Kees de Vreugd

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

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place” (Acts 2:1). The outpouring of the Holy Spirit did not happen at a random time or place. The Spirit came from heaven with a sound like the blowing of the wind, filling “the house where they were sitting”. This house was located in Jerusalem. God-fearing Jews from all nations had come as pilgrims to Jerusalem for the feast of Weeks (Hebrew: *Shavuot*) in accordance with the commandments in the *Torah* (Leviticus 23:15).

Pentecost (Greek: fifty) is the closing day of the period of seven weeks (the Hebrew *Shavuot* means weeks), which are counted starting on *Passover*. In a sense, *Shavuot* is the completion of *Passover* (Deuteronomy 16:9-12). The first fruits of the wheat harvest, which started after *Passover*, are brought to the Temple as an offering of thanksgiving for the harvest. Joy characterises the feast, joy ‘before the Lord your God at the place He will choose as a dwelling for his Name’.

Covenant Renewal

In Jewish tradition, at least since the second century BC, *Shavuot* also became the feast of the revelation of the *Torah*. From the exodus of Egypt till the revelation on Mount Sinai in the book of Exodus, is exactly seven weeks, bringing us to the date of *Shavuot*. The celebration of the revelation (or, as it is usually said in Hebrew, the giving) of the *Torah* has become the focus of *Shavuot* in Judaism. So, *Shavuot* is also a celebration of the renewal of the covenant.

A remarkable tradition is the custom of staying awake during the night and studying the *Torah* together, just as the Israelites at Mount Sinai had to prepare themselves for the receiving of the covenant. Still today, everywhere in Jerusalem, lectures and study sessions are organised and widely attended. At dawn, everybody goes up to the Western Wall, singing with ecstatic joy, to say the morning prayers together. It is not entirely clear how old this tradition is, though it is an ancient tradition. Could it be that the disciples of Jesus, too, had all been together, during that night, learning together the teachings of Jesus?

Which House?

This leads to the question: where were they together? Apparently, they were sitting in a house (Acts 2:2). Which house was that? Which house could contain one hundred and twenty people (Acts 1:15)? What place would have the facilities to baptise three thousand people (Acts 2:41)? Could it be the Temple? There was space for such a



Happy young Israeli girl in a wheat field on Shavuot Jewish Holiday. | Photo: Shutterstock

crowd. There were enough *mikvehs* (ritual baths) available. Only there would the signs of the Spirit outpour be immediately noticed by bystanders (2:6).

In Hebrew, the temple is often referred to as the ‘House of the sanctuary’. God calls the temple ‘My house’. The Temple Mount is called in Hebrew ‘Mount of the House’. Finally, it is said of the early believers, that ‘they continued to meet together in the temple court’ (Acts 2:46). The first believers were and remained pious, *Torah* observant, orthodox Jews!

Law and Spirit

Even in Christian tradition, the connection has been made between the gift of the Holy Spirit and the gift of the *Torah*. None other than Augustine (354-430 AD, North Africa) demonstrates that Moses, on the *Feast of Weeks*, received the Law ‘that was written by the finger of God’ (Exodus 31:18). Augustine explains that the finger of God is none other than the Holy Spirit. After all, according to Luke (11:20), Jesus says that He drives out demons by the finger of God, but according to Matthew (12:28), He says that He does so by the Spirit of God. So, the finger of God refers to the Spirit of God. Moreover, Paul writes: “We know that the Law is spiritual” (Romans 7:14). It is the Spirit of God by which God moves the Israelites to follow His decrees and be careful to keep His laws (Ezekiel 36:27). Jewish tradition, expounding Exodus 20:15, links the Law of God to fire. The *Torah* is hewn out of the fire and given out of the fire: “The voice of the Lord strikes with flashes of lightning” (Psalm 29:7). The intense study of the *Torah* sets a man on fire, as it is told by rabbi Ben Azzai (2nd. Century). When he was expounding Scripture, fire was blazing around him. He said: “I compare the words of the *Torah* with the Prophets, and the words of the Prophets with the Writings, and the words of the *Torah* are as delighted as they were on the day they were given on Mount Sinai. Essentially, they were given in fire, as it is written (Deuteronomy 4:11): ‘The mountain blazed with fire.’”

Birth of the Church

Is *Pentecost* the birthday of the Church? First of all, we should note that Peter, in his speech to the people, addresses the crowd as ‘fellow Jews and all who are staying (verse 5) in Jerusalem’. Moreover, the first believers were orthodox Jews, ‘zealous for the Law’ (Acts 21:20). From the Scriptures of Israel, Peter is explaining to his fellow Jews, gathered on this feast of Israel, what had happened to him and his friends, no less than the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel. It is the affirmation of the risen Christ. Peter’s *Pentecost* sermon is, in fact, an Easter sermon. It is the risen Christ who has now poured out the Spirit He had received from the Father. “Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ” (verse 36). All Israel is present in those who are addressed by Peter.

The typical response of the hearers is a question: “What shall we do?” echoing Israel’s response to the covenant: “We shall do and hear” (Exodus 24:7). Peter’s answer is: “Repent and be baptised...” Repentance in Hebrew is *teshuvah*, turning around, returning to the covenant of God in the *Torah*. *Pentecost* is the feast of the renewal of the covenant, the renewed covenant with Israel.

The renewal of the covenant, however, confirmed in the death and resurrection of Christ and in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, bears fruit for all the nations: “All peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Genesis 12:3). It will last until Acts chapter 10 for this to take effect. There, to the astonishment of Peter and the other Jewish believers, the gift of the Holy Spirit is poured out on the Roman officer Cornelius and his household. Cornelius was a God-fearing gentile. He came close to Israel without becoming Jewish. Even the gentile nations may share in the promise of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 3). Now, the nations are joining Israel in the praise of God (Acts 10:46; Romans 15:9). The kingdom of God is coming.

Short News

Good News for Chocolate



Agricultural expert Ellen Graber has possibly discovered unusual cocoa seeds that could solve the problem of global shortages of chocolate and cocoa. During the 7 Oct. Hamas invasion, the various cocoa plants in southern Israel were still in small pots. After the invasion, the area turned into a closed military zone, and the seedlings had to do without water and fertiliser for at least a few months. Over twenty plants of a particular species survived and were then exposed to below-zero temperatures, unusual for the region. They survived that, too, leading Graber to label the seedlings ‘superheroes’. | Photo: Shutterstock

Hamas Destroyed Gaza

Research shows that Hamas has destroyed Gaza’s economy in recent years. Under Hamas rule, the gross domestic product per capita has fallen to just 30 per cent compared to that in the West Bank. Unemployment has skyrocketed. In short, the report by Kohelet Policy Forum, an Israeli think-tank, draws a bleak picture of the effects of Hamas rule and the enormous effort needed to rebuild Gaza after the war.

Grant for Terrorists



The Palestinian Authority (PA) is eager to gain control of Gaza after the war. In to accomplish this, the old government has been dissolved and a new one formed. The PA is also looking for other ways to continue paying terrorist compensation because they realise that direct compensation will no be longer accepted. The options being considered include a points-based system for additional government allowances, a one-time allowance for business setup, and channelling payments through a charity rather than the government. | Photo: Flash 90

Heroes of the Heartland

Shmuel Junger
Executive Director | CFOIC

On 7 October, all of Israel woke up to a reality in which thousands of terrorists infiltrated Israeli communities, mercilessly slaughtering hundreds of civilians in their homes and on the roads. Following this unprecedented attack, the whole country united. Much attention has been directed at the bravery exhibited by many across the state of Israel at large. The bravery and determination demonstrated by the inhabitants of the Biblical heartland (Judea and Samaria) have yet to receive enough acclaim. For decades, they have faced all kinds of terror attacks, ranging from arson, car-rammings, stabbings, shootings and even bombings. Yet, they have remained at the forefront with steadfast devotion, protecting our presence in the heart of our historic homeland.

Vulnerable

About 70% of family homes in Judea and Samaria are currently deprived of a father and husband because they have been drafted to fight in the war against Hamas, leaving their families behind. All of these reserve soldiers have left their wives and children with the sobering awareness that their communities,

surrounded by much weaker fences than the one that was breached on Gaza’s border, are significantly more vulnerable with the departure of so many men.

Strongly Motivated

The residents of Judea and Samaria are more than just citizens who are significantly contributing to the country on a daily basis. They are, in fact, very altruistic and strongly motivated. Isolated and surrounded by hostile villages, they always face security threats. With the IDF stretched on several fronts, individuals have volunteered to fill holes with local security teams. People of all ages have willingly stepped up to provide assistance to other communities throughout Israel. The support from within has been overwhelming and displays a general sense of warmth and generosity of spirit.

Attacks

The determination of the people of Judea and Samaria persist in confronting an evil enemy. This enemy knows no bounds in its viciousness and its desire to break the spirit of our people. We are waking up to the reality that the majority of our Palestinian neighbours were not only in favour of the massacre perpetrated on 7 October



Support for the families in one of the communities.

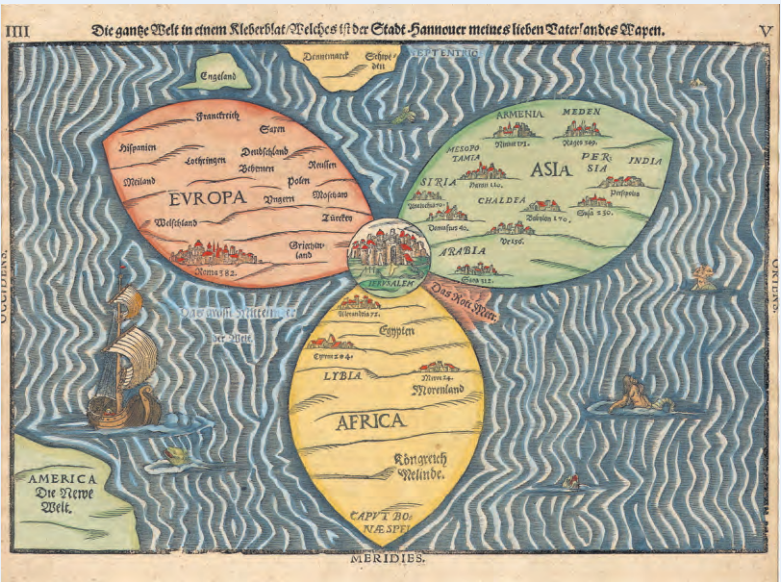


Shmuel Junger on watch duty. | Photos: CFOIC

The Bible Speaks

Ezekiel 38:10-12 (NASB)

This is what the Lord God says: “It will come about on that day, that thoughts will come into your mind and you will devise an evil plan, and you will say, ‘I will go up against the land of unwallled villages. I will go against those who are at rest, who live securely, all of them living without walls and having no bars or gates, to capture spoils and to seize plunder, to turn your hand against the ruins that are now inhabited, and against the people who are gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods, who live at the center of the world.’”



Ezekiel’s prophecy mentions the names ‘Gog and Magog’ here. A Jewish explanation points to their numerical value of 70 and then tells us that the attack on Israel involves the whole world. It is remarkable that the Hebrew literally says that God’s people live on the “navel of the earth”. This is more than just a geographical location. The navel is the connection to life. This is the tragedy: In turning away from the Jewish people, the world turns against God Himself. | Photo: Wikimedia Commons

but truly view all of Israel as ‘settlers’. Tragically, this view among Palestinians in Judea and Samaria has clearly grown over the last several months. In fact, terrorists in Judea and Samaria show no signs of halting their attacks.

Media Offensive

In addition, residents of Judea and Samaria also face a second front: an ugly PR campaign that condemns purported violence by Jewish ‘settlers’. In particular, I am referring to the travel and financial sanctions imposed on a handful of ‘settlers’ by the White House, the United Kingdom, France, and others. It is very apparent that the current administration in the White House is responding to political pressures associated with the upcoming presidential election. In the most recent Democratic primary in Michigan on 27 February, President Joe Biden suffered an embarrassing show of 100,000 voters who voted ‘non-committed’ instead of casting their ballots for the incumbent. A large portion of these ‘non-committed’ Democrats consisted of Arab/Muslims and other anti-Israel activists who intended to demonstrate not only their disapproval of Biden’s ongoing military support for Israel but also their willingness to abstain from voting in the upcoming presidential election. Now, it

continues to snowball with more and more rhetorical condemnations of Israel’s ongoing campaign against Hamas. Just recently, while speaking in Selma, Alabama, Vice President Kamala Harris claimed Israel was not doing enough to prevent a ‘humanitarian catastrophe’ in Gaza. Collectively, these decisions by the Biden administration constitute an ugly, vile attempt at achieving political gain.

Support

As Christian Friends of Israeli Communities, we seek to do our part to continue strengthening the residents of Judea and Samaria who have put themselves on the line to rebuild our ancient civilisation in our historic homeland. Many of the communities we work with have lost loved ones serving in the current war against Hamas. Facing mounting pressures from multiple sources, the people of Judea and Samaria need our help. In the brutal videos of Hamas from 7 October, the world learned the sad reality—you don’t need to live in Judea and Samaria to be a ‘settler’; in the eyes of Hamas, all Jews in Israel are settlers.

Shmuel Junger is executive director of Christians Friends of Israeli Communities (CFOIC) and lives in the Biblical heartland.

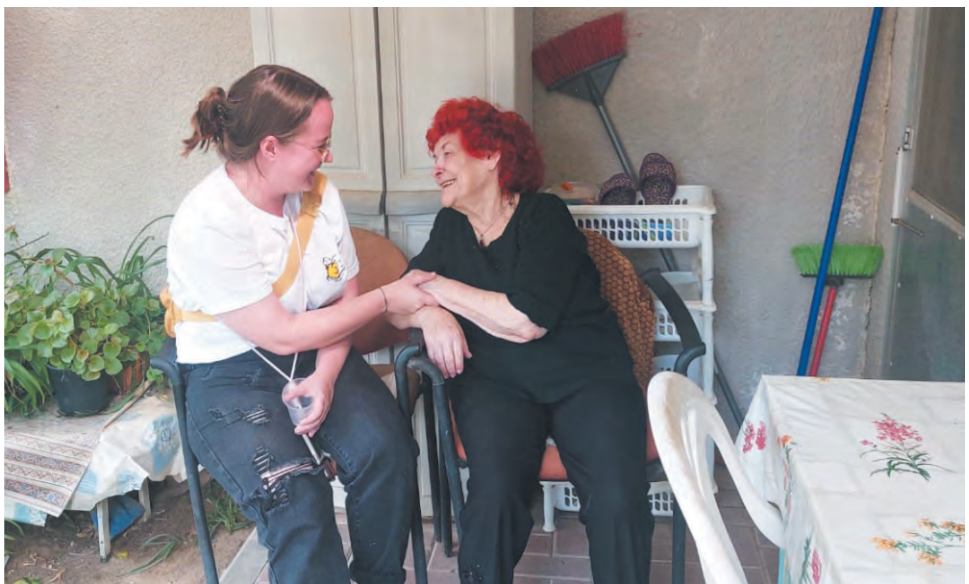
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Israel Under Fire



Aid is critical for victims' immediate well-being, but also aid for their long-term recovery.



Volunteer visit at Amigour. | Photos: The Jewish Agency for Israel

Almost eight months have passed since the brutal attack on Israel and the kidnapping of family members, children and friends. During *Passover* in the last week of April, families released photos of their holiday table with empty chairs for the hostages still held captive in Gaza. In Tel Aviv and other cities, installations featured 133 empty chairs, each accompanied by a photo of one of the hostages. These chairs served as poignant reminders of those still separated from their families.

Despite countless negotiations, Hamas has consistently refused to provide any information about the hostages to their families, causing the hope of a reunion to increasingly fade.

Since 7 October, time has seemed to stand still in Israel. In addition to the fear and despair over the hostages' dire situation, many businesses are going bankrupt. Their employees are deployed as reservists on the northern and southern borders or guarding endangered areas within the country.

Help for Terror Victims

Christians for Israel has supported direct relief efforts, as well as long-term rehabilitation programmes and help for rebuilding communities through our partners in Israel among others the Jewish Agency for Israel.



A Kfar Aza couple who were evacuated to Kibbutz Shefayim. They have moved from the hotel into a temporary pre-fab home. C4I sponsored appliances like refrigerators, ovens and washing machines. | Photo: C4I

The 'Swords of Iron' war has been going on for more than six months. In this period:

- 13,500+ rockets were fired into Israel from Gaza and Lebanon.
- 1,574 civilians and soldiers were murdered.
- Over 15,000 civilians and soldiers wounded.
- 118,000 evacuees are still unable to return to their homes.
- 300,000 reservists are mobilised.
- 13,945 new immigrants (*Olim*), Holocaust survivors and elderly people from the Amigour retirement homes live in emergency accommodation provided by the Jewish Agency.
- 1,003 new immigrants (*Olim*) and senior citizens continue to live in risk areas (in the north and south of Israel).

Psychological Help

Children from the destroyed kibbutzim are receiving therapeutic help to cope with the horrors and losses they've experienced. Summer camps for teenagers offer support, build resilience and help them process their experiences. Additionally, there are also specialised programs for senior citizens aimed at combating PTSD, depression and isolation.

Family Assistance for Evacuees

Residents of kibbutzim, such as Kfar Aza and Beeri, are being relocated from hotels to caravans. These communities receive psychological support and practical help. They are in need of household appliances, clothing and food.

Safety

Bomb shelters across northern and southern Israel are being renovated, and new shelters are being constructed. Ensuring people feel safe and can reach a shelter quickly

during emergencies is of utmost importance. Consider, for instance, elderly individuals with mobility issues: it is crucial that they have a shelter nearby.

Food Programmes

Since the outbreak of the war, many Israelis have been struggling with food insecurity. Israeli farmers are fighting for their livelihoods. Food prices have risen. The western part of the Negev desert and other areas on the border have reduced their agricultural land by around 30 per cent. To support those in need, food parcels for families, cooked meals for the elderly and snack packs for schoolchildren are distributed daily.

Equine therapy to deal with stress and trauma. | Photo: Red Mountain Therapeutic Riding Center



Will You Help?

Israel needs your help. Assist us in addressing the areas of greatest need.

All help and every prayer is a blessing.

Complete the coupon at the back of this newspaper. Any amount is welcome!

Meals on Wheels—Meals and Comfort

Koen Carlier

Aliyah Fieldworker Ukraine

Over the years, our team has encountered numerous people in need during hundreds of visits throughout Ukraine: illness, immobility, old age, isolation, and, since February 2022, thousands of refugees escaping the violence of the war. Our efforts to support these Jewish communities across Ukraine, in partnership with local rabbis overseeing soup kitchens, began years ago. We assist those who cannot prepare meals by arranging for local volunteers to deliver food to their homes.

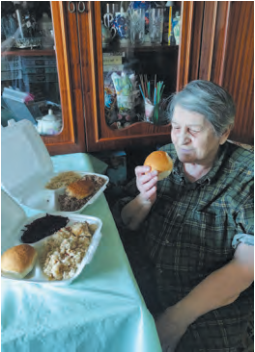
The Bible contains numerous references urging us to help those in need. Our *Meals on Wheels* initiative is a tangible way to make a difference—simply rolling up our sleeves and getting to work. We launched this effort during the Covid-19 pandemic, and it continues amid the conflict in Ukraine. Even during numerous visits, we realise that having social interaction is so important. We also share the faithfulness of the God of Israel, serving as a bridge of comfort and practical assistance. The tears of gratitude we witness repeatedly leave us profoundly moved.

“The poor and needy search for water, but there is none; their tongues are parched with thirst. But the Lord will answer them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them.” *Isaiah 41:17*



Roman (born 1947)
Roman was born in Kiev, where he has lived all his life. He never married and has no children. The only relative he has is his sister Said (born 1937), who lives in Israel. He used to work as a train driver and receives a monthly pension of US \$90. “You know, I wouldn’t survive this year without your help.

Your meals and food packages saved me when I was sick, during the pandemic and this war. I literally have no money to buy enough food. Thanks to you, I enjoy delicious meals twice a week. And, as always, *matzah* for *Passover*. But what you did for us when there was no electricity [because of the war, ed.], words cannot describe. I am so grateful.”



Kateryna (born 1938)
Kateryna spent her entire life in Kiev. Now, she is experiencing a terrible war for the second time. Kateryna worked as a nurse. In 1993, she retired. Her monthly pension is US \$128. From this pension, she pays about US \$55 for utilities. Kateryna was known for her good cooking skills, but

now this is very difficult. She suffers from dementia and quite often just forgets to turn the oven off. Her general health is also failing. She has heart problems and also serious problems with her back; it is difficult for her to stand and walk. So our *Meals on Wheels* is a real relief for her.



Eduard (1949)
“I receive meals regularly and I am very grateful to those who help me financially and to those who cook for us. There are so many people involved, and it is a heartwarming act of love. It is always great to realise that there is someone who cares and is not indifferent to the needs of others. However, it is especially important now, during the hardships of the war we face every day. I express my sincere gratitude to our sponsors! May God bless them in a very special way!”

How Does it Work?
Approximately 10,000 meals are prepared every month in nineteen locations in Ukraine. The needed ingredients are bought at local wholesalers. The meals are then prepared at local soup kitchens. The meals are then packed and provided to Jewish elderly and refugees who are struggling to make ends meet.
One meal costs €5 / US\$ 5

YES! I Want to Support Christians for Israel

CHRISTIANS FOR ISRAEL MINISTRY

- ☐ My donation for ministry costs, print & post
- ☐ Emergency Situation in Israel

ALIYAH - BRING THE JEWS HOME

- ☐ One person from Ukraine - € 135 | US \$150
- ☐ One family (5 people) - € 675 | US \$750
- ☐ One bus (25 people) - € 4500 | US \$5000
- ☐ First Home in the Homeland - € 450 | US \$465
- ☐ Bnei Menashe (India) (1 person) - € 950 | US \$1000
- ☐ Aliyah Ethiopia

SOCIAL WELFARE PROJECTS

- ☐ Meals on Wheels - € 5 | US \$5 each
- ☐ Food Parcels in Ukraine - € 15 | US \$15 each
- ☐ Children at Risk - Jaffa Institute
- ☐ Hineni Soup Kitchen - € 7,50 | US \$7.50 per meal
- ☐ Holocaust Survivors Ukraine and Moldova
- ☐ Christian Friends of Israeli Communities (CFOIC)
- ☐ Arab Christians

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- ☐ Israel 70 Years (One-off Collector's Magazine)
- ☐ Jerusalem 50th Anniversary (One-off Collector's Magazine)
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