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CHRISTIANS FOR
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Understanding Israel and world events from a Biblical perspective

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A long exposure photo showing the Iron Dome anti-missile system firing interception missiles at rockets fired from the Gaza Strip into Israel. | Photo: Flash90

The Fourth Gaza War

■ **Yochanan Visser**

Christians for Israel Correspondent | Israel

The Fourth Gaza War is now more than ten days old. Fighting continues unabated with Hamas continuing to pummel Israel with its rockets and the IDF conducting an extensive campaign against Hamas' military infrastructure and its underground tunnel city. There's much speculation about an imminent cease-fire but both sides deny that this could be the case anytime soon.

The war started effectively after Israel refused to withdraw its security forces from the Temple Mount and re-open the Damascus Gate Square in Jerusalem. The square was closed after violent riots that lasted for days.

On Monday morning, 10 May 2021, Palestinian Arabs again violently clashed with Israeli security forces and during the skirmishes, at least 395 of them were injured. Hamas leaders reportedly watched the video footage of this bloody riot and then issued an ultimatum to Israel. Israel had to withdraw its security forces from the

Temple Mount without further delay. However, the government in Jerusalem refused because it doesn't take ultimatums from Hamas and considers itself the legitimate power in Jerusalem.

The Iranian-backed Sunni terror organisation then launched rockets at Jerusalem which triggered a harsh Israeli response. In the ensuing hours, the Israeli air force (IAF) started to bomb some Hamas facilities in Gaza. The Palestinian terror organisations in the coastal strip shot at least 200 rockets at southern Israel.

The Fourth Gaza War had begun, but this one would differ from the previous three ones.

First of all, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad appeared to be in possession of ultra-modern weaponry and used different tactics than they did in the past.

For example, the two terror groups launched rockets in salvos, a tactic that apparently was meant to 'mislead' the Iron Dome anti-missile shield. Indeed, Iron Dome proved to be far less effective than in the previous wars between

Israel and the Gaza-based terror groups. There were many direct hits in several Israeli cities, causing the death of at least ten people. Another number of rockets landed in parks, roads, and other places in these cities.

Another new tactic used by the two terror groups was inciting the Arab Israeli population, resulting in massive and very violent protests against the Israeli security forces and numerous brutal attacks on Jewish Israelis or Jewish property.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recognised what was going on and told the public that Israel was "fighting on two fronts".

Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) also introduced new weapons such as a kamikaze drone. This unmanned aerial vehicle can carry a payload that explodes when it hits its target. The Israeli military intercepted one at the beginning of the war.

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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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Human Rights Watch Accuses Israel of War Crimes

■ Andrew Tucker

International Editor | Christians for Israel

On 27 April, Human Rights Watch (HRW) released its report entitled *A Threshold Crossed - Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution*. It is a 213-page litany of accusations and complaints. It portrays the Jewish State of Israel as an inherent apartheid state whose sole purpose is to persecute the Palestinians. According to HRW, Israel is guilty of crimes against humanity – apartheid and persecution. All Israeli laws showing preference to Jews must be abolished. Israel's leaders should be prosecuted by the International Criminal Court, and Israel should be subject to international condemnation, isolation and sanctions.

What clearly most offends the writers of this report is that Israel dares to be a Jewish State – a homeland for the Jewish people. How dare the Jews claim a homeland of their own? How dare the Jews be Jews?

The report comes as no surprise. For decades, since the 1970's the claim that 'Zionism = Racism' has remained etched in the minds of many who refuse to accept the existence of the Jewish people. The Palestinian leadership has made an art form of rejectionism. Endless missed opportunities. It's always Israel's fault.

Like many of its predecessors, which have relegated to the dustbin of history, this report is full of black-and-white generalisations, one-sided assertions, and a broad smattering of blatant falsifications. But this reflects more the growing modern trend that divides history into 'victims' and 'perpetrators', claims all suffering must be the fault of the other, and demands justice.

There is not one word even suggesting the slightest possibility that the Palestinians themselves, or their brothers and sisters in the Arab world, share responsibility for their dire situation. Nothing about the Holocaust, the Grand Mufti's alliance with Hitler, the 1948 attack on Israel by the Arab



Human Right Watch has long been a leader of the coalition of numerous powerful NGOs targeting Israel. | Photo: Shutterstock

states, the subsequent attempts to exterminate the Jewish State, the intifada's or Arafat's rejection of Barak's offer in 2000. Tragically, the report also ignores the many examples of Jewish/Arab cooperation in Israel, the Arab Israeli's who work hard to make Israel a success, and those Palestinians who do not blame Israel for their sufferings.

Israeli-based NGO Monitor issued a detailed analysis of the HRW report. It concludes that: "HRW's text is part of a renewed NGO push over the past 18-months, attaching the term 'apartheid' to discourse on Israel. Capitalising on their breakthrough in the International Criminal Court (ICC), the NGO network seeks to reinforce political narratives in contrast to credible factual presentation and legal analysis. In a broader context, this report is another move in the decades-long series of obsessive attacks against Israel and its legitimacy as the nation-state of the Jewish people. The organisation has again demonstrated the

accuracy of founder Robert Bernstein's condemnation, in the New York Times, of HRW for 'issuing reports on the Israeli-Arab conflict that are helping those who wish to turn Israel into a pariah state.'

Germany was very quick to express its rejection of the report. German government spokesman Steffen Seibert said that the international human rights watchdog's assumption that "Israel is committing the international law crime of apartheid is explicitly not endorsed by the federal government. We don't think that is a correct assessment."

Joshua Block wrote in Jerusalem Post: "To get a sense of HRW's disturbing anti-Israel bias, consider this: over the past five years, the NGO has authored seven special reports on Israel. In comparison, the organisation published none condemning North Korea, one of the worst criminal regimes in the world; and only three reports addressed the human rights violations of the repressive, theocratic regime in Iran.

Prayer Points

By C4I Prayer Team

Israel

- Pray for the reduction and easing of the unrest in Israel and Jewish-Arab tensions and violence. Pray for the people of Gaza, that they'll be freed from the terror regime of Hamas and PIJ, that they will be spared unnecessary harm.
- Pray for Israel's protection against rocket attacks from Gaza. In recent years relatively quiet periods alternate with periods of heavy fire. Pray that the attacks will cease completely and that Israel will be protected.
- Pray for the Israeli government. Pray that after the elections, a good coalition government will be formed that will govern the country resolutely in the coming three years. Pray that personal interests will be set aside and that all attention and efforts will be for the national interest. Also, pray that politicians will put their trust in God.
- "Judah will be inhabited forever and Jerusalem through all generations" (*Joel 3:20*). On 10 May, Israel celebrated *Yom Yerushalayim* (Jerusalem Day). On this day, Israel commemorates the reunification of Jerusalem in 1967 and the establishment of Israel control over the Old City. Give thanks that this extraordinary event took place and pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

Israel & the Nations

- Israel, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain have discussed expanding cooperation in facing common enemies. All four believe a nuclear Iran would be a major threat. The remarks came following an article by World Jewish Congress president Ron Lauder in Arab News calling for a 'NATO of the Middle East.' Pray for a continuous blessing for Israel with alliances and friendships that keep her safe.
- Apparently, many anti-Semitic images are being sent over WhatsApp, especially in young people's WhatsApp groups, such as school classes or sports teams. Pray that there will be a greater awareness among young people of the suffering caused by jokes about the Holocaust and that this will stop.

Christians for Israel

- Please pray for the Aliyah field workers of Christians for Israel in Ukraine. They often have to do their work in exhausting and dangerous circumstances. Pray also for the distribution of food parcels to the Jewish communities throughout Ukraine.

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

Ramifications if US Return to 2015 Nuclear Agreement

■ Efraim Inbar & Eran Lerman

By ignoring Israel's views on an issue critical to its security, Washington will cast a dark shadow over its status as a key ally in the Middle East.

The United States is keen to return to the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran and is likely to do so even though Iran is playing hard to get. (This assumes that Ayatollah Ali Khomeini indeed wants to renew the accord, to obtain sanctions relief).

The Biden administration's declared intention of reaching a "better and longer-lasting" follow-on agreement with Iran (focused on more effective inspections, Iran's regional mischief and ballistic missiles) will be null and void if Iranian demands for full sanctions relief are met. Such a concession would leave the United States without any real leverage on Iran.

Iran will certainly attempt to obtain an American commitment to preventing Israeli attacks against it in line with the Western commitment in the 2015 accord not to sabotage Iran's nuclear facilities. Thus far, Washington has refrained from publicly criticising Israel for its alleged attacks on Iranian targets. But if Washington agrees with Iran on a return to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Israel will be put in a difficult position. Does it continue covert action aimed at slowing the Iranian nuclear project against the wishes of the Biden administration? And if covert operations exhaust themselves, will Israel risk conflict with the United States by directly attacking Iranian nuclear facilities?

Israel should be prepared to defend itself against Iranian missile attacks from Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Yemen.

Even if the lifting of sanctions gives the Iranian economy only a gradual boost, Tehran's position in the Middle East will be significantly strengthened. Its aggressive behaviour across the region will intensify—as it did after the 2015 accord was signed.

Worst of all, an American return to the 2015 agreement in defiance of Israel's concerns on an issue that is vital to its security will cast a dark shadow over Israel's status as a key American ally in the Middle East. And it would be wrong to assume that any 'compensation' offered to Israel by the United States will include armaments that will improve Israel's attack capability against Iranian nuclear facilities.

Under these circumstances, Israel's entente with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia may intensify. On the other hand, it also is possible that the Gulf Arabs will bandwagon with Iran when they see America withdrawing from the region and Israel's hands tied by the



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with President Joe Biden. | Photo: Flash90

United States. The Biden administration clearly is less committed to the Abraham Accords than its predecessor. The seeds of a Saudi Arabia-Iran dialogue, brokered by Iraq, are already evident.

There also are question marks about the future of ties between Israel and Azerbaijan, a country in which Israel has important strategic assets. However, Baku is growing closer to Ankara, and this could lead Azerbaijan to adopt a less friendly approach towards Israel, especially if Washington disregards Jerusalem.

Such a weakening of Israel's strategic status, alongside the Biden administration's friendlier approach to

JCPOA is an element in maintaining Israel's freedom of action and deterrent ability. It is important to do so now in real-time.

- Jerusalem needs to prepare for heightened tensions with Washington and attempt to temper this through diplomatic efforts in Congress, in the Jewish community and with friendly groups in the United States. Israel's stance against the nuclear agreement still can receive considerable sympathy in the United States.

- It is critical that these messages be conveyed by senior professional echelons, without partisan political messaging—Israeli or American. Even if there are disagreements with the Biden administration, the possibility of a U.S.-Israel rift must be avoided.

- Israel should be prepared to defend itself against Iranian missile attacks from Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Yemen.

- Iran wants to surround Israel with missile bases. In this context, Jordan is likely to be a target for Iranian subversion. Strategically, Jordan is Israel's 'soft underbelly.' Therefore, Jerusalem must do what it can to help maintain the stability of the Jordan.

Indeed, it will take a great deal of sophistication and skill to overcome the difficult situation in which Israel finds itself.

Professor Efraim Inbar is president of the Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security. He was the founding director of the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies and a professor of political studies at Bar-Ilan University. He has been a visiting professor at Georgetown, Johns Hopkins and Boston universities.

IDF Col. (res) Dr Lerman is vice president of the Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security. Lerman was deputy director for foreign policy and international affairs at the National Security Council in the Israeli Prime Minister's Office. He held senior posts in IDF Military Intelligence for more than 20 years and teaches in the Middle East Studies programme at Shalem College in Jerusalem.

This article was first published by the Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security.

Short News

Corona and Israel



The Corona crisis in Israel seems to be on its way out now. So much so that Israel again allows travelling to the country under certain conditions. People outside on the streets do not have to wear mouth masks anymore, and many amenities like shops and restaurants are reopened. | Photo: Flash90

#JeSuisSarah

In April, a social media campaign was launched demanding justice for Sarah Halimi. Halimi, an Orthodox Jewish woman in her sixties, died in 2017 after being pushed out of the window of her Paris apartment by neighbour Kobili Traore, who shouted: 'Alluha Akbar' (God is great in Arabic). Recently France's highest court decided that the murderer of Sarah Halimi cannot stand trial because he was too high on marijuana to be criminally responsible for his actions. Thousands of protesters, many of them Jewish, gathered in Paris to demand justice for Halimi. The rally was the first time in decades that a large number of French Jews gathered to protest against organs or actions of the French state. The Combat Antisemitism Movement launched a social media campaign, using #JusticeForSarah and #JeSuisSarah hashtags, aimed at showing solidarity with Halimi's family and France's Jewish community. In the wake of the ruling, French President Emmanuel Macron expressed support for the country's Jewish community and its efforts to bring Halimi's killer to trial. He said he would seek a change to laws to prevent such a case from happening again.

Politics and the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum



Three members of the advisory board of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum have resigned because of disagreement about the imposed appointment by the minister of Culture of a Polish Government politician in the advisory board of the museum. They fear that the history of Auschwitz-Birkenau becomes a stake in governmental political patriotism. The minister believes that the resignation of the three members 'threatens to politicise the discussion about the most important museum concerning martyrdom in Poland'. | Photo: Flash90

A New Role for Arab Parties in Israel?

■ Ariel Ben Solomon

Jewish News Syndicate

Israel remains in a political deadlock as both right-wing, and left-wing blocs remain unable to form parliamentary majorities and cannot find formulas to create a unity government. The situation is creating an opportunity for Arab parties, which have never previously joined any Israeli government, to solve the impasse by throwing their mandates behind one of the blocs.

In particular, the United Arab List, known in Israel by its Hebrew acronym Ra'am, has signalled its willingness to break from long-held political tradition and sit alongside its Jewish counterparts within a coalition. Ra'am party chairman Mansour Abbas has entered into negotiations with both blocs, seeking to extract substantial political returns in exchange for the party's four seats.

Yet opposition—particularly among right-wing Jewish parties—over the Ra'am Party's still-radical ideology may ultimately prevent the political branch of Israel's Islamic movement from becoming a political 'kingmaker.'

Rodayna Badir, an expert on Arab society in Israel, warns that Abbas's willingness to sit with his Jewish Knesset colleagues is not an ideological shift towards religious coexistence but a rather shrewd political tactic to increase its influence, particularly among more than a million Arab voters.

The Islamic movement has its roots within the Muslim Brotherhood. Ra'am's sister organisation in the Gaza Strip is the Hamas movement. While Hamas utilises violent tactics to achieve its political goals, Ra'am represents a much smaller subsection of society within Israeli society, severely limiting its ability to advance a political agenda.

Badir noted that it is consistent with the history of the southern branch of the Islamic movement to try and reach understandings with the Israeli government, despite the movement's radical Muslim Brotherhood roots.

She said that remaining outside of the government has prevented significant portions of Israel's large governmental budget from reaching the Arab sector for many years. Entering the government and receiving special budget allocations for the Arab sector "would only strengthen their power in Arab society," Badir told JNS.

As far as Arab voters are concerned, many seek additional funds to address growing violence and crime within their communities and improved housing and infrastructure.

A Power Struggle over who will Lead Israeli Arabs

Before the most recent election—Israel's fourth in just two years—Ra'am broke away from a larger Joint List of Arab parties. The breakaway paid off for Abbas when Ra'am barely crossed over the Knesset's minimum vote threshold. Now the Knesset has two separate Arab parties, and Abbas can potentially be a political kingmaker even as other Arab Knesset members prefer to remain in the opposition.

"The history of the Islamic movement shows that it is not used to receiving instructions or being No. 2," assessed Badir. As for the Joint List, "Ra'am was second in power after the Communist Hadash Party, so a power struggle ensued over who will lead the Israeli Arabs."

By entering the government and receiving a special budget for the Arab sector, "this would only strengthen their power in Arab society," she added. "The Islamic movement always moves on two equal axes: what the Arab public wants and preservation of its power as an organisation."

Hamas in the Gaza Strip is a more radical Muslim Brotherhood offshoot that regularly uses violence to achieve its goals. In other countries, including inside Israel, the movement utilises more pragmatic political tactics. Being that Ra'am is just one component of an Arab minority in a strong majority Jewish state, it is drastically limited in what actions it can effectively carry out.

Arab society currently seems deeply conflicted, continued Badir, adding that the current leadership vacuum is not helping the community deal with its pressing issues. "Arabs are tired of slogans and are looking for a change," she said. "The Islamic movement has managed to absorb this sentiment and act on it."

Shahin Sarsour, a veteran Arab political observer and former adviser to various Arab Knesset members, explains that the Islamic Movement has a base of around 175,000 to 205,000 voters or approximately four to six mandates.

"Their voters want to see an Arab party that has influence



Mansour Abbas, head of a conservative Islamist party Raam, speaks at his campaign headquarters in the northern Israeli city of Tamra on March 23. | Photo: Getty Images

and not just sits in the Knesset without any achievements for the Arab sector," he said.

Still, Sarsour told JNS that despite Abbas's efforts, the likelihood of Ra'am joining either a right-wing or left-wing government remains low.

While Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has aggressively courted Ra'am's four seats, which represent critical mandates he needs to form a majority, key political ally Betzalel Smotrich of the Religious Zionists Party refuses to sit with any Arab party. It's not clear whether key additional right-wing party leaders Gideon Sa'ar or Naftali Bennett would agree to sit together with Ra'am or rely on it to support a minority government from outside the coalition.

In early May, Bennett met with Abbas—the first-ever direct meeting between the two-party leaders—to explore whether there was any room for cooperation.

Even if Ra'am doesn't join a government, its efforts to engage with the Israeli political establishment is a drastic change from the Arab parties' role in the past, which was limited to criticising Israeli governments from the opposition. Such efforts may ultimately lead to Arab parties playing a more active role in forming governments in Israel, gaining increased budgets for the Arab sector and improving cooperation with their Jewish counterparts.

This article was originally published on 4th May 2021 by Jewish News Syndicate (www.jns.org). Republished with permission.

The Sheikh Jarrah Conflict

■ Arsen Ostrovsky

A brief summary of the facts and chronology of the dispute over the Jerusalem neighbourhood.

The case of Sheikh Jarrah is a complex and long-running legal matter, subject to competing property claims by Jewish owners and Palestinian tenants over a small area of land in Jerusalem. The affair also incorporates the area's religious significance and spans a history dating back to the pre-1948 British mandate era. The case has been subject to legal proceedings since 1972 and is currently before Israel's Supreme Court, where a final decision is expected in the next month.

This particular case has garnered unprecedented attention in the wake of the recent Human Rights Watch (HRW) report accusing Israel of engaging in 'apartheid' practices, the International Criminal Court (ICC) investigation of alleged Israeli war crimes and a concerted campaign by the pro-Palestinian BDS and NGO network, as well as the Palestinian leadership, to

exacerbate and inflame the currently tense situation in and around Jerusalem.

Where is Sheikh Jarrah?

Sheikh Jarrah is a predominantly, though not exclusively, Arab neighbourhood of Jerusalem, located about a mile and a half from the Old City.

What's the Historical Significance of the Area?

Jews refer to the area as 'Shimon Hatzadik,' 'Simeon the Just,' a revered 3rd century B.C.E. Jewish High Priest whose tomb is located there. Jewish pilgrims often visit the neighbourhood.

Palestinians claim the area derives its name from Sheikh Jarrah, a physician to Saladin, the Islamic military leader who fought the Crusaders in the 12th century. His body is believed to be buried there.

What is the Claim Against Israel?

The pro-Palestinian community is claiming that Israel is unjustly evicting four Palestinian families from their homes in the neighbourhood. This exemplifies

accusations against Israel in the context of the broader conflict with the Palestinians.

In response, the owners of the property (a private Israeli NGO, Nahalat Shimon) claim they have the legal title to the property in question and that, in the absence of rent being paid by the tenants, the tenants ought to be evicted for breaching the law.

What is the Chronology?

Sheikh Jarrah is an Arab neighbourhood that developed outside the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem in the 19th century.

According to Israel's Supreme Court, the land in question was purchased by the local Ashkenazi and Sephardi communities from its Arab owners in 1875, primarily because of the area's religious significance in housing the tomb of 'Simeon the Just.' The property was registered in the Ottoman land registry as a trust under the name of rabbis Avraham Ashkenazi and Meir Auerbach.

Continued on page 5

Continued from page 4

A small Jewish community lived there peacefully in co-existence with the local Arab community until 1948, when the War of Independence broke out.

The Jewish owners had tried to register ownership of the property with the authorities of the British Mandate in 1946.

When the War of Independence broke out in 1948, the Old City of Jerusalem and its surrounding area—including Sheikh Jarrah—was captured by Transjordan (now Jordan). The Jewish families were forcibly evicted. Custodianship of the property was transferred to the Jordanian Custodian of Enemy Properties. In 1956, the Jordanian government leased the property to 28 families of Palestinian ‘refugees’ while maintaining ownership of the property.

After the Six-Day War in 1967, when Israel regained control of Jerusalem, it passed a law allowing Jews whose families were evicted by Jordanian or British authorities in the city prior to 1967 to reclaim their property, provided they could demonstrate proof of ownership and the existing residents were unable to provide such proof of purchase or legal transfer of title.

In 1973, ownership of the property was registered by Sephardic Community Committee and the Knesset Israel Committee with Israeli authorities pursuant to the above law.

Subsequently, in 2003, the owners sold the property to ‘Nahalat Shimon,’ an Israeli NGO that seeks to reclaim property for Jews evicted or forced to flee as a result of the 1948 War of Independence.

Beginning of Legal Proceedings

In 1982, the Jewish owners (Sephardic Community Committee and the Knesset Israel Committee) sued the Palestinian families residing in Sheikh Jarrah. They demanded their eviction on the basis that they were squatters on the property. The Magistrate Court determined that the Palestinian families could not demonstrate their ownership of the property but that they enjoyed Protected Tenant Status. As protected tenants, they would be able to continue living on the property as long as they paid rent and maintained the property. This arrangement was agreed upon mutually in agreement signed by the

parties, in which the tenants recognised the trusts’ ownership in exchange for protected tenant status.

Beginning in 1993, the trusts began proceedings against the residents based on their non-payment of rent and of illegal changes to the property.

In 1997, Suliman Darwish Hijazi, a Palestinian man, attempted to challenge the trusts’ ownership of the property, based on a Kushan (Ottoman title) that he allegedly purchased from a Jordanian man al-Bandeq, in 1961. The court ruled that Hijazi failed to demonstrate that the Kushan refers to the claimed property in Shimon HaTzadik and that forensic evidence raised the likelihood that the Kushan had been altered or forged. Furthermore, Hijazi failed to prove that al-Bandeq had ever owned the property and thus had the right to sell it. Finally, Hijazi had never acted to protect his property rights, both during the Jordanian and Israeli periods, by registering it, charging rent, or paying property tax.

Prior Court Rulings

Key points:

- The residents are protected tenants and must pay rent to the property’s owners.
- The residents never paid rent and carried out illegal construction on the property. The court previously ordered the residents to pay the outstanding rent and immediately evacuate the illegally constructed additions.
- The court rejected claims that the Jordanian government had committed to transferring ownership to the residents and that this commitment never came to fruition due to the outbreak of the Six-Day War. The only document ever provided as evidence



| Photo: Flash90

was a copy of an unsigned standard Jordanian Department of Housing form that did not contain an agreement regarding the transfer of rights.

- The court rejected claims that a resident purchased ownership rights from a man named Ismail. The claimant could not demonstrate that Ismail had been the property’s owner, that he had purchased the property from him or that the claimant had ever been a protected tenant at the time of the alleged sale.

The Current State of Legal Proceedings

Following the judgement of the Jerusalem District Court in February 2021, upholding an earlier court decision that, in the absence of payment of rent, the Palestinian residents must vacate the premises, the tenants appealed to the Supreme Court, with a final verdict expected in the next month.

Arsen Ostrovsky is chairman and CEO of The International Legal Forum, an Israel-based legal network of over 3,500 lawyers and activists in 30 different countries, committed to the fight against antisemitism, terror and the delegitimation of Israel in the international legal arena.

Short News

Saffron from Israel



If the project succeeds, it could be very profitable. An entrepreneur from Israel developed a machine and a system to vertically grow saffron, with the possibility of several harvests per year. Currently, all the saffron in the world comes from Iran, and since it is the most valuable spice available on the world market, it also called ‘red gold’. It takes 150,000 flowers to produce one kilogram of saffron. And that one kilogram of saffron costs US \$10,000. Saffran-Tech might be able to change this. | Photo: Unsplash

Investigate Together

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Amazon have started working together in the area of quantum-computer research. Cooperation between the researchers and developers aims to accelerate the development of algorithms and hardware. It is the first time that Amazon has concluded such an agreement with an Israeli scientific institute.

Turtles Together

When Israel’s coast had to deal with this disaster, the turtles saved from the oil and tar spill in February are free again. The oil-covered turtles had a good cleaning in the past weeks and a mayonnaise-diet so that their intestines were cleansed as well. These are endangered species. They were put back into the sea at a considerable distance from the coast.

Blooming Business



For a dry Middle East country, Israel hosts a surprisingly robust flower industry, producing almost a billion picking flowers and ornamental branches a year. Israel is a major exporter of flowers, half of which are for export and half for the local market. Some 65% of flower exports are transferred to the flower exchanges in Europe, mainly Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany. The rest are traded independently by the growers themselves, mainly in England and the Scandinavian countries, France, Germany, and today also in Japan and China. In total, there are about 250 flower growers in Israel, and the industry is considered stable. Only at the end of 2021 will the exporters know how deep the damage to the flower industry was caused by the Coronavirus crisis in Israel and around the world. | Photo: Flash90

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ISRAEL & CHRISTIANS TODAY
WEEKLY UPDATE

Prayer Points & Weekly Update

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Israel Prayer Calendar
June - July 2021

www.c4israel.org
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The Land of Anatevka

■ **Anemone Rüger**
Project Coordinator - Holocaust Survivors in Israel & Ukraine | Christians for Israel

For centuries, Ukraine was home to thousands of Jewish *shtetls* –small towns with a large Jewish population- where even the Ukrainian neighbours spoke Yiddish. Fleeing discrimination and persecution in Western Europe, Jews had found refuge here in the East as early as the Middle Ages. The religious and cultural life of Eastern Jewry developed to a considerable extent on Ukrainian soil - from the Hasidic movement to *klezmer* music and Yiddish literature, most prominently represented by Scholem Alejchem.

Here, too, Jewish communities were repeatedly plagued by pogroms - in the 17th century under Khmelnitsky, in the 18th century under Gonta and Selesnyak. At the end of the 19th century, a whole wave of pogroms flooded the region, culminating in the massacres in the wake of the October Revolt. The bitter lessons of the region's history eventually produced notable pioneers of the modern state of Israel, who saw the only chance of survival for the Jewish people in the return to their historic homeland between the Mediterranean and the River Jordan. The last ship to Haifa Israel left Odessa in 1919; then, the Soviet Union was closed.

After the Third Polish Partition (1795) and a considerable land gain in the west of her empire, Catherine the Great had decreed that Jewish settlement was to be limited to a rayon between the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea; thus, the Jewish population in Ukraine had steadily increased.

Holocaust by Bullets



Einsatzgruppen murder Jews in Ivanhorod. | Photo: Public Domain

With Hitler’s German invasion of the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941 – now 80 years ago- centuries of Jewish history and culture in Ukraine came to an abrupt end. Official estimates put the number of Jews murdered during the Nazi occupation at 1,700,000 by the end of 1944.



Mass shooting by a mobile death squad of the Nazi SS near the town of Vinnitsa. Photo: Public Domain.



Former *shtetl* (small town) of Bratslav. | Photo: Christians for Israel

Since all men of military age - including Jewish men - were immediately drafted into the Red Army and sent to the front, it was mostly women, children and the elderly who were overrun by the brutality of the German troops. The invading soldiers were immediately followed by the Einsatzkommandos of the SS, who were usually supported by Ukrainian police forces. Town by town, the Jewish population was rounded up and shot at mass graves already dug - long before the infamous Wannsee Conference. Children were not shot - they were often buried alive.

Babi Yar

Babi Yar became known as the largest mass grave on Ukrainian soil. Shortly after the takeover of Kiev, which was preceded by fierce fighting, the Jewish citizens were

arrive in Palestine, as they had thought. Under severe beatings and unspeakable humiliations, the Jews of Kiev who had not been able to escape were driven to the ravines behind the cemetery and shot. 33,771 women, children and elderly people were executed by the Einsatzkommandos together with the help of Ukrainian police on 29 and 30 September 1941. The executioners had deliberately chosen the time for the unprecedented massacre: It was Yom Kippur, the highest Jewish holiday.

In the months that followed, Babi Yar remained a notorious execution site: More than 150,000 people, including Sinti and Roma and a unit of the Soviet Navy, were murdered in the Babi Yar ravine. But every Ukrainian town where Jews once lived has its own ‘Babi Yar.’ Wherever the German occupation forces went, they

The executioners had deliberately chosen the time for the unprecedented massacre: It was Yom Kippur, the highest Jewish holiday... Babi Yar remained a notorious execution site

ordered by a notice on 28 September 1941, to present themselves with valuables and luggage at 8am the following day at the Jewish cemetery on the outskirts of the city. At the entrance to the then barren area, which is now in the Kiev city area, the unsuspecting doomed victims were met by police and dogs. First, they had to hand over their papers, then their valuables. When they were forced to undress, it was clear that they would never

immediately took care of the ‘final solution’ and sometimes exterminated entire Jewish communities. Only relatively few survived in hiding with the help of courageous Ukrainian rescuers. It is now assumed that there are 2000 Jewish mass graves in Ukraine. To this day, new execution sites are being discovered; eyewitnesses are revealing their terrible secrets in their twilight years.



Menorah shaped monument, erected at Babi Yar after Ukraine became sovereign in 1991. | Photo: Shutterstock

Practical Help

Instead of a childhood, the Holocaust survivors had an inconceivable tragedy that scarred them for life. Now, in their old age, the heavy memories force themselves in their consciousness. In Ukraine, there are still about 500 Jews who survived a concentration camp and another 17,000 who managed to save themselves by escaping under horrible circumstances. The survivors of the second generation also suffer enormously from what their parents went through and what was taken from them in terms of extended family. In addition, there has been an increasing hardship in recent years: the struggle for physical survival. Today's seniors have spent their lives paying into a system that no longer exists - neither free medical care nor a decent retirement. While housing was usually allocated by the state in Soviet times, the costs of living increased tremendously, while pensions remained very low.

More than 500,000 Jewish people have made Aliyah from Ukraine to the land of Israel since the opening of the former Soviet Union in the early 1990s, fulfilling biblical prophecy. But not all have the necessary documents or the support of a family for such a step. Many stayed behind. Christians for Israel International have been on the ground for many years, maintaining relationships with the Jewish communities in Ukraine and assisting



Christians for Israel handing out food parcels in Ukraine. | Photo: Christians for Israel

both those who want to make Aliyah to Israel and those in need. Tens of thousands of food packages are distributed annually. Well over 1000 seniors are now supported through sponsorships.

"I Fear No Evil"

Born in Donetsk, Ukraine, Natan Sharansky campaigned in the 1970s for the rights of Jews in the Soviet Union in the 1970s. He was imprisoned for nine long years in a Siberian gulag for alleged espionage activities. Into his isolation cell, he had managed to smuggle a precious small Hebrew booklet

with Psalms. During the long period of imprisonment, the mathematician deciphered the Hebrew letters until he understood the words. The first sentence he could read was from *Psalms* 23: "I will fear no evil, for you are with me."

Under great international pressure, Sharansky was

exchanged for a Soviet spy on the Glienicke Bridge in Berlin in 1986 and emigrated to Israel. From 1996 he held various ministerial positions in Israel and recently headed the Jewish Agency, Israel's immigration authority, for ten years.



Then-Prime Minister Shimon Peres greets Natan Sharansky at Ben-Gurion Airport, where he was flown from Germany in February 1986 after being freed from a Soviet prison. | Photo: GPO



The central ceremony for the Holocaust Memorial Day in Yad VaShem. Natan Sharansky placing a wreath of flowers. | Photo: GPO

Rising Tension

Aliyah fieldworker Koen Carlier: "In recent months there was much speculation about the Russian troop buildup in Crimea (southern Ukraine) and near the border with Russia in eastern Ukraine. Since the war broke out suddenly in the spring of 2014, the conflict in eastern Ukraine gradually transitioned into a stalemate. However, now that war violence has flared up again, with several soldiers killed, mostly on the Ukrainian side, people fear that the situation might escalate again.

In 2014 our Aliyah team was confronted with thousands of Jewish refugees from the east seeking refuge in western Ukraine as well as helping those who wanted to go to Israel. Currently, our Christians for Israel team in Ukraine is already noticing an increase in the demand for the help we provide during the Aliyah process. People are asking for assistance with passports applications and for their visits to the Israeli embassy, which is needed to obtain the necessary papers to make Aliyah.

What the future brings us in Ukraine is still a matter of guessing. We are not going to speculate too much, but we try to prepare ourselves as best as we can in the event that a new war breaks out. Of course, we pray and hope for the best, but we prepared for the worst."



| Photo: Christians for Israel

C4I’s First Online Forum

■ Chan Siew Fong
Regional Trainer | Christians for Israel Asia

Due to the pandemic, Christians for Israel International’s biennial forum, which is usually held in Jerusalem, had to be moved online for the first time. The conference was conducted over two days in two and a half hours each day. The content delivered at this forum on 4 - 5 March was as excellent as in past conferences, with the added potential of reaching many more since the videos are easily accessible on the internet.

The conference began with a warm welcome from our Chairman, Dr Leon Meijer. Following that, Reverend Cornelis Kant, our Executive Director, explained the choice for the theme for this forum: “For such a time as this, this theme, taken from *Esther 4:14*, is directed at our understanding of the times and seasons that we are living in and knowing what we ought to do. Just as the Jewish people were at risk of a genocide orchestrated by Haman, Israel is under attack today militarily, socially, and politically. Even sections of the Church, through ignorance, delegitimises Israel.” Reverend Kant made a stirring call to the Christians for Israel International family to stand with Israel in our times and bring awareness to the Church in our nations of Israel’s unique role in God’s salvation plan.

The session, *How Western indulgence of the Palestinian dream has obstructed the path to peace* by Dr Einat Wilf had me soak up every word. Dr Einat Wilf, co-author of *War of Return*, is a leading thinker and international speaker on foreign policy, economics, education, Israel, and the Jewish people. Some nuggets I caught are: “The right of return is not a marginal issue in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is how the Palestinian Authority hopes to transform Israel into an Arab-majority state. It is also the reason behind Palestinians’ rejection of land for peace as they want ‘Palestine for Palestinians’ from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. This is a battle of mutual exhaustion. Who will tire first?”

Reverend Willem Glashouwer, President of Christians for Israel International, issued the following challenge. With the world convulsing from birth-pangs leading to the emergence of Anti-Christ and the final world empire, as prophesied in various scriptures, the urgency of the hour is to bring the message of the gospel to the nations and to comfort God’s chosen people before the soon return of the Prince of Peace.

Johannes Gerloff, theologian and journalist, pointed out that it was never a reality that Jews might perish in a genocide orchestrated by Haman as described in the biblical narrative of ‘Esther’. Since God had promised to preserve Israel forever, He will always do just that. What was hanging on the balance was Esther’s decision. She could choose to be silent and save her own skin or risk her life to save her people.



Christians for Israel staff in our headquarters in Nijkerk, Netherlands. | Photo: Christians for Israel

If she chose the former, then God would supply relief from another source (*Esther 4:14*). Israel’s existence was and is never in question. How we respond to threats to Israel’s existence is the issue – are we prepared to pay the price in support of the Jewish people?

Aliyah
Danielle Mor, Vice-President for Israel and Global Philanthropy at the Jewish Agency for Israel, Isaac Herzog, Chairman of the Executive of the Jewish Agency for Israel and Michael Freund, founder and chairman of Shavei Israel, brought heartening news that Aliyah had continued unabated despite immense logistical challenges during the pandemic. The regathering of Jews to the Promised Land is miraculous in many ways, the most astounding being closing a time gap of 27 centuries.

Judea and Samaria
Sondra Oster Baras, Director from Christian Friends of Israeli Communities, told us that she had discerned a significant recent change in opinion - a vast majority of Palestinians may now be open to Judea and Samaria being annexed and brought under the Israeli government. This is because the silent majority may no longer be buying into anti-Israel propaganda, as they have observed that funds have gone into boycotting Israel or the pockets of the elite rather than into projects for improving the lives of ordinary Palestinians.

Virtual Tour
Moshe Garbay, Director of Keshet Journeys, took us on a virtual tour of Israel starting from Mount Ebal at the altar of Joshua.

For such a time as this, this theme, taken from Esther 4:14, is directed at our understanding of the times and seasons that we are living in and knowing what we ought to do...

Danielle Mor shared a video clip, *Mission to Ethiopia*, that featured a community’s Aliyah journey from the prayer closet to Ben Gurion Airport.

Hineni
Benjamin Philip, Director Hineni, Jerusalem, reported that the soup kitchen functioned as normal during the pandemic and gave even more meals than before with the increase in demand from holocaust survivors who are living without home care. The work of Christian volunteers to prepare and deliver warm meals and the financial support from Christians for Israel had brought comfort to many Jewish people.

In between sessions, we were treated to beautiful music by a host of musicians - world-renown harpist Maestro Alvaro Sanchez, violinist Seow Jin Chong and pianist Soh Hwee Ping from Singapore, Christian Verwoerd and Band from the Netherlands, and Christian for Israel’s homegrown talents, Peeber and Maaieke.

There were opportunities for networking in breakout rooms after the sessions each day.
All too soon, the conference was over. Kudos to all who had organised this online forum painstakingly and caringly with the worldwide Christians for Israel family in mind.



An impression of the Christians for Israel 2021 Forum from our headquarters in Nijkerk, Netherlands. | Photo: Christians for Israel

Security Implications of Iran-China Deal

■ Ardavan Koshhnood

There is no doubt that the agreement will boost Iran's intelligence and counterintelligence capabilities and thereby make it more aggressive.

During the rule of Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, the Sino-Iranian relationship was strained. At a time when socialist countries in the Middle East were moving quickly to establish diplomatic relations with China (Egypt and Syria in 1956 and Iraq in 1958), Iran had close ties to Western countries and recognised Taiwan as a sovereign state. However, as the ideological and political distance between China and the Soviet Union expanded in the 1960s, Tehran and Beijing found they had a common rival in Moscow and grew significantly closer. The two states established formal diplomatic relations in 1971, and in 1973 Iran sent its first ambassador to Beijing. In September 1978, when Iran was in turmoil, the premier of the People's Republic of China, Hua Guofeng, visited Iran as a show of support for the Shah. China perceived Iran as a major political and economic actor in the Middle East, playing an important role in keeping the region stable while balancing between East and West. During his visit, Guofeng warned the Shah "against joint Soviet-American interference in Iran and their collusion in destabilising the country."

After the fall of the Shah, Sino-Iranian relations continued to improve. The new Islamic regime saw both the United States and the Soviet Union as antagonists, not least because of their support for Iraq in the Iran-Iraq War. The Soviet Union, which had initially claimed to be neutral, provided Saddam Hussein with support during the last years of the war. Although the relationship between Iran and Russia is cordial today, Tehran knows it cannot rely solely on Russian support in times of crisis, especially in the face of US sanctions. By strengthening its relations with China, the regime hopes to create a triangular alliance that will benefit its position in the Middle East and toward the West.

For Beijing, Iran is strategically located between China and Europe and is a vital country for the Belt and Road Initiative. Iran helps China expand its influence in the Middle East, a region that contains a vast quantity of energy resources that China needs.

The Chinese focus on the Middle East is not only about energy resources and economics. The region is also important to Beijing from a military-strategic standpoint. China has long viewed the Middle East as a buffer zone against foreign aggression on its western frontier.

The Sino-Iranian relationship, driven by common economic and security interests, has been friendly for five or six decades. In view of this fact, the newly signed Iran-China deal should not come as a surprise.

The 25-Year Deal

On Saturday, 27 March 2021, the foreign ministers of Iran and China signed the Sino-Iranian deal, known as the *Joint Comprehensive Strategic Partnership* between the



Wang Yi and Mohammad Javad Zarif after signing the Joint Comprehensive Strategic Partnership on 27 March 2021. | Photo: Wikimedia

Islamic Republic of Iran and the People's Republic of China. The deal covers 25 years of cooperation between the two states and helps Iran break the international isolation it has been suffering through US sanctions. The deal also helps China expand its global influence.

It is believed that the deal will provide China with a highly discounted supply of Iranian oil. In exchange, it will invest \$400 billion in Iranian infrastructure, from telecommunications and information technology to health and transport systems. Of course, because of the Islamic regime's unwillingness to improve the lives of the Iranian people, these Chinese investments will primarily, if not solely, benefit the regime's elites.

Beyond the deal's economic features, it has important security aspects pertaining to intelligence and military collaboration. While the economic prospects of the deal should by no means be ignored (as economic power is critical to political and military power), the security collaboration stipulated in the deal deserves equal attention. This collaboration would strengthen the position of the Islamic regime both in Iran and in the Middle East while enhancing China's global position by enabling it to wield immense influence in the Middle East region.

With respect to military cooperation, the deal outlines joint training exercises as well as research and weapons development. While Iran and China already have a well-established military cooperation, the deal will institutionalise it even more.

Intelligence sharing is another aspect of the security collaboration between Iran and China, as presented in the deal. While this aspect remains secret for obvious reasons, it is more likely that China will have a large role in Iranian intelligence and counterintelligence than the other way around. Through Iran, China will be able to collect intelligence more easily concerning geopolitical

changes and threats in the Middle East. Iranian intelligence and the Islamic regime's Quds Force are highly active and have established a region-wide intelligence network that can benefit Chinese interests.

Implications of the Deal

The Islamic regime in Iran has experienced numerous intelligence and counterintelligence failures over the last decade. To a large extent, this is due to the regime's destruction, out of fear of coups, of the Iranian military and intelligence community after the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Over its 40-year tenure, the regime has mainly leaned on the tools of violence, torture and assassination to gather intelligence and neutralise threats.

The regime understands that effective intelligence and counterintelligence are vital for its survival. To reform and improve these areas, Iran recently signed an intelligence pact with Russia. The intelligence collaboration stipulated in the deals is in alignment with this goal. The Sino-Iranian deal will give Iran access to Chinese technology, training and expertise, and will contribute to stronger Iranian intelligence and counterintelligence.

Iran is highly active in the region as well as in Europe and the United States with regard to espionage, terrorism and destabilisation, and there is no doubt that the Iran-China deal will boost its intelligence and counterintelligence capabilities and thereby make it more aggressive. This will have serious ramifications for the Iranian opposition, as the Islamic regime will be more effective against its opponents. The Islamic Republic will become more robust and forceful as a result of the deal.

Ardavan Khoshnood, a non-resident Associate at the BESA Center, is a criminologist and political scientist with a degree in intelligence analysis. He is also an Associate Professor of Emergency Medicine at Lund University in Sweden. This article was first published by the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies.

Signs of Faith
By Kees de Vreugd

Havdalah

In this series, 'Signs of Faith', objects that express Jewish faith are explained and discussed.

There is a distinction between light and darkness, between holy and profane, between Israel and the nations between the seventh and sixth working days. That is an essential value in Judaism, expressed in the *Havdalah* prayer. The *Havdalah* is a short ceremony at the close of the *Shabbat* and holidays, marking the distinction between the sanctified day and the transition to the new week or workday. This happens when it has become so dark that you can discern three stars in heaven. The lamps at home are not yet burning so that the light of the *Havdalah* candle can be seen better. So light and darkness have their places in the ceremony. The Hebrew word *Havdalah* means distinction.

The ceremony dates back to the early second temple period. According to Jewish tradition, the text of the blessing was formulated by the 'Men of the Great Assembly'. They were the successors of Ezra the Scribe (*Ezra 7:6*). That would imply that this *berachah* is one of the oldest Judaism knows.

For the *Havdalah* at the end of the *Shabbat*, a cup of wine, a candle and a box of fragrant spices are used. The candle is braided in a special way and has three pits. Of course, the spices box (*hadass*) is beautifully designed, often in silver.

The ceremony opens with reciting verses from *Isaiah 12:2-3*: "See, God is my salvation...", followed by a couple of other Bible verses. With words from *Psalms 116*: "I shall lift up the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord" (*verse 13*), the blessing over the wine is introduced: "Blessed are You, Lord, our God, King of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine."

Finally, the blessing over the light follows. God is given thanks as the Creator of 'the light of the fire'. Lighting fire is the principle of one of the categories of work that are forbidden on *Shabbat*. Everybody takes a smell of the spices, the candle is extinguished in a few drops of wine, and everybody wishes each other a good week. The *Shabbat* is bidden farewell, but with the scent of the spices, the *Shabbat* is yet taken into the new week. | Photo: Shutterstock



Jewish Festivals

Tzom Tammuz

Fast commemorating breaching the walls of Jerusalem before the destruction of the Second Temple
27 June 2021

The Seventeenth of Tammuz (*Hebrew: Shiv'ah Asar b'Tammuz*) is a Jewish fast day commemorating the breach of the walls of Jerusalem before the destruction of the Second Temple. It falls on the 17th day of the Hebrew month of Tammuz and marks the beginning of the three-week mourning period leading up to Tisha B'Av.

Shabbat Chazon

Shabbat before Tish'a B'Av
(Shabbat of Prophecy and Vision)
16-17 July 2021

Shabbat Chazon ('Sabbath [of] vision' takes its name from the *haftarah* (a series of selections from the books of *Nevi'im* of the Hebrew Bible that is publicly read in a synagogue as part of Jewish religious practice) that is read on the Shabbat immediately prior to the mournful fast of Tisha B'Av, from the words of rebuke and doom coming from Isaiah in the *Book of Isaiah 1:1-27*. It is also referred to as the Black Sabbath due to its status as the saddest Shabbat of the year (as opposed to the White Sabbath, Shabbat Shuvah, immediately preceding Yom Kippur).

Tish'a B'Av

The Ninth of Av
17-18 July 2021

Tisha B'Av is an annual fast day in Judaism, named for the ninth day (*Tish'a*) of the month of Av in the Hebrew calendar. The fast commemorates the destruction of both the First Temple and Second Temple in Jerusalem, which occurred about 655 years apart, but on the same Hebrew calendar date. Tisha B'Av is never observed on Shabbat. If the 9th of Av falls on a Saturday, the fast is postponed until the 10th of Av.

Tu B'Av

Jewish Holiday of Love
23-24 July 2021

Tu B'Av is a minor Jewish holiday (the fifteenth of the month Av). In modern-day Israel, it is celebrated as a holiday of love (*Hebrew: Hag HaAhava*), similar to Valentine's Day. It has been said to be a 'great day for weddings'.

Shabbat Nachamu

Shabbat after Tish'a B'Av
(Shabbat of Consolation)
23-24 July 2021

Shabbat Nachamu takes its name from the *haftarah* from Isaiah in the *Book of Isaiah 40:1-26* that speaks of 'comforting' the Jewish people for their suffering. It's the first of seven *haftarahs* of consolation leading up to the holiday of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year.

Rehabilitation of the Pharisees

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

“The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses...” *Matthew 23:2*

In the common parlour, the Pharisees do not have a good name. According to Dutch dictionaries – and I suppose it will be the same in English – a Pharisee is a hypocrite. That seems to find support in verses from the Bible. But is that all the New Testament tells about the Pharisees?

It is remarkable that it was Pharisees who came to warn Jesus for Herod. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were prominent Pharisees. In the *Book of Acts*, it is no one less than Gamaliel, who takes up for the followers of Jesus (*Acts 5:34*). There exists a natural kinship between the Pharisees and the 'first church', just as that was felt with Jesus (*compare Matthew 22:34 and Marc 12:28*).

Presumably, the negative image of the Pharisees is fed mainly by their alleged role in the trial of Jesus (although they gradually disappear from the scene), by certain parables, and by the eightfold 'Woe' in *Matthew 23*.

The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses...
(Matthew 23:2)

Jesus' warnings there – for that is what I believe it is – are by no means soft. As a matter of fact, you can find comparable critique in the Talmud as well. So also, *Matthew 23* is not disconnected from Jewish tradition.

Meanwhile, we could easily read over a fundamental saying of Jesus: “The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; therefore all that they tell you, do and observe,” even if they perhaps do not do it themselves (*Matthew 23:2-3*). So, according to Jesus' saying, the

Scribes and the Pharisees have the authority to explain and apply the laws of the Torah (Moses). Jesus is speaking to 'the crowds and His disciples'. Implicitly, He thus affirms the validity and the legitimacy of the 'oral Torah' (the tradition

of the Pharisees, continued by the rabbis after the destruction of the Temple AD 70). And this is after that, in the previous chapters, the bankruptcy of the Sadducees was declared (*Matthew 21:43; 22:29*).

Despite their own shortcomings, the leadership over the people is entrusted to the Pharisees. They may be called 'rabbi' (teacher), even though only One is 'your Teacher'. Therefore I plea for the rehabilitation of the Pharisees.

Book Review



Jewish Internationalism and Human Rights after the Holocaust
by Nathan A. Kurz

In a way, the seeds of the modern law of human rights – its strengths, but also its inherent flaws – were laid in Europe in the early 1920s.

Following the 19th century of colonialism in which the European powers expanded globally, after WWI, it was the victorious western powers (France, Britain, Italy, the USA) who decided how the territories of the defeated German and Ottoman empires in Europe, the Middle East and Africa and beyond should be divided up. At Versailles, the modern concept of self-determination of peoples was born. A first, albeit very imperfect, manifestation was the League of Nations (created in 1922). This included the Mandate system, which was intended to help the peoples of mandate territories to independence, and the complex set of agreements dealing with minority rights.

Tragically, this system failed to prevent Europe from again plunging into war. After the horrors of WWII and the Shoah, the allies agreed not only on the new borders of Europe. They also agreed on a new international legal order.

In the 1940s, three things happened that changed the world fundamentally. The first was the creation of the UN and the development of a real system of international law: the United Nations, with its myriad of organs and institutions, tribunals and even a court (the International Court of Justice). For the first time in history, we can speak of a truly universal legal system. An imperfect one, but nevertheless one that potentially has teeth.

The second was the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. Separated for two millennia from their land, struggling to retain their Jewish identity while integrating into their host nations, suffering pogroms and persecution wherever they went, Jews returned to their ancient homeland from the mid 19th century onwards. After European Jewry faced near-extinction in the Holocaust, the Jewish State of Israel was born on 14 May 1948.

The third was the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948, laying the foundations of the modern human rights movement. While human rights were barely mentioned in the UN Charter, since the 1970s, we have witnessed the explosive development of the modern human rights movement. Today, the international legal system is organised not only on the basis of states but increasingly around the notion of individual human rights. The individual - not the state or even the nation - is becoming the main object of international law.

Remarkably, Jews played a major role in all three: not only in the State of Israel (obviously) but also in the development of the UN and the conceptualisation and organisation of the modern human rights movement.

This important book by Nathan Kurz (Birkbeck College, University of London) is one of a growing body of academic literature examining the philosophical and intellectual roots of the concept of human rights and the role of Jews and Jewish organisations in the development of the modern human rights movement.

The book's core thesis is that the creation of the State of Israel meant

that it was 'all but inevitable' that the Jewish internationalism that had developed over previous decades would irreconcilably collide with the modern human rights movement. He describes two aspects to this.

The creation of the Jewish State of Israel in the midst of conflict in 1948 brought with it the seeds of divorce. Kurz acknowledges that the Israeli/Palestinian conflict is "deeply complex" and that "Israel was never solely responsible for its continuation". Nevertheless, "the non-resolution of the Palestinian refugee problem, a long struggle to grant full citizenship to an Arab minority, and the maintenance of a military occupation in the West Bank and Gaza all represented structural constraints that severely impeded the practice of Jewish human rights advocacy."

Kurz criticises modern representations (such as Philippe Sands' recent best-seller *East-West Street*), which generally position the modern human rights movement, and the Jewish thinkers like Hersch Lauterpacht, who provided its intellectual foundations, as providing a response to deal with the atrocities of the Holocaust. According to Kurz, this kind of "celebratory narrative that venerates the formative role played by Jewish lawyers, diplomats, and activists in laying the foundation for a new architecture of international human rights and criminal law in the twentieth century" fails to appreciate "how fraught the relationship between some Jews and international rights protection became in the second half of the twentieth century".

Andrew Tucker is Director of The Hague Initiative for International Cooperation.
Jewish Internationalism and Human Rights after the Holocaust by Nathan A. Kurz. Cambridge University Press, 2021. ISBN 9781108870429

A Day of Fasting and Commemoration

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

Tisha B'Av is a day of fasting and commemoration, and is commemorated on the ninth of the Jewish month of Av. This year it will be on 18 July, starting the evening before. A lot of sad moments in Jewish history will be commemorated.

In 587 BC, the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar besieged the city of Jerusalem for almost two years. The famine became severe, and many inhabitants tried to escape. They were captured and killed or taken into exile to Babylon on the 9th of Av. The city and the holy Temple were entirely destroyed. We can read about this sad event in *2 Kings 25* and *Jeremiah 52*. In the book of Lamentation, the Jewish people lament and weep about this profound loss.

Seventy years later, the Persian king Cyrus allowed Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city and the Temple. A time of joy and new hope for the Jewish people. In the year 70 AD, the Romans besieged the city resulting in another period of severe famine. Over a million Jews died of hunger or were brutally slaughtered by the Romans. This tragedy took place on that very 9th of Av. One hundred thousand young men and women were sold as slaves. And again, the city and the

holy Temple were burnt down and destroyed. The beginning of 2000 years of the diaspora of the Jewish people. Today you can visit the museum 'Burnt House' in the old city of Jerusalem and see the remnants of the burnt houses.

In 135 AD, a Jewish revolt led by Bar Kochba tried to chase off the Romans, but unfortunately, this ended in a bloodbath again on the 9th of Av. The Roman emperor Hadrian changed the name of Judea in Palestine in order to wipe out any memory of Israel and Jews.

Every year on this same day, Jews worldwide sit down, read the book of Lamentations and commemorate these tragic events, of which the destruction of the temple is the culmination.

One might assume that we as Christians are not involved in this, but unfortunately, this is not true. When the Roman Empire fell in the 4th century AD, the Christian Byzantines came to power in the holy land. They believed that God eternally condemned the Jews for killing Jesus. Only on the 9th of Av the Byzantines allowed Jews to enter the city of Jerusalem to commemorate the destruction of the Temple in return for payment.

And as if this were not enough: in 1492 AD, the Spanish king and Christian Ferdinand van Aragon issued the 'Edict of Expulsion'. Spain was to become a purely



Boulders from Roman destruction of the Second Temple. | Photo: Shutterstock

Christian country. Jews had to choose between conversion and baptism or expulsion from the land in four months. Over 100,000 Jews had to leave Spain and lost almost all their properties. The last Jew left Spain on the 9th of Av. Also, the famous Jewish scholar and rabbi Abarbanel left the country and lost his fortune.

So it is important for us as Christians to be aware of our own history and to express our compassion to the Jewish people on Tisha B'Av.

On this very day, the Jewish people are also looking hopefully forward. Once in the future, the Messiah will come and rebuild the Temple. Zechariah says: "Shout for joy and rejoice, daughter of Zion; for behold I am coming and I will dwell in your midst," declares the Lord (...) And the Lord will possess Judah as His portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem' (*Zechariah 2: 10-12*).

The Root of Anti-Semitism

■ **Rev Willem JJ Glashouwer**
President | Christians for Israel International

O God, do not keep silent;
Be not quiet, O God, be not still.
See how Your enemies are astir,
How Your foes rear their heads.
With cunning, they conspire against Your people;
They plot against those You cherish.
"Come," they say, "let us destroy them as a nation,
That the name of Israel be remembered no more."
With one mind, they plot together;
They form an alliance against You. (*Psalms 83:1-5*).

Suddenly violence flares up in Israel. Hamas starts to fire rockets, and Israel defends herself and retaliates. Explosions of hatred all over the world against the Jewish people and the State of Israel. During the long history of the Jewish people, waves of hatred have hit the Jewish people and Israel. Why? And why is God silent, the Jewish author of *Psalms 83* asks himself and asks the Almighty One? Then he makes this important discovery about the root of antisemitism.

To hate the Jews is to hate the God of the Jews. This emerges clearly from the psalmist's loud lament to Heaven, out of the depths of the misery of the Jewish people: "O God, do You not see it all? Of course, You do; but oh God, do not remain silent. Rouse Yourself, and do not remain idle. This is not just about our enemies, oh God; they are Your enemies as well. They hate You. They cunningly plot an attack against Your people because that is who we are—Israel: Your people. They want to strike those You love, so this is basically an attack against You, oh God. They want to hit You hard in Your heart. How do they plan to do that? By destroying Your Jewish people, so that the name of Israel will be forgotten and will be

remembered no more."

"For they have conspired together with one mind," says the psalmist, but he clearly sees beyond the immediate threats when he continues, "They form an alliance against You." The battle is between the God of Israel and other gods of this world. That is what the hatred for Israel is ultimately all about.

No other people on earth have been so persecuted and destroyed, nearly annihilated, and still remains a recognisable people. If the Jewish people themselves did not always want to be identified as Jewish, her enemies made sure that she was. While for centuries, when they lived in strange surroundings, often barely aware of their own Jewishness, those around them knew exactly who was a Jew and who was not. Hitler's henchmen knew exactly how to trace them. In Russia and in its satellite countries, people filled with a fiery hate for the Jews knew where to find them.

And when hate 'rains' on the Jewish people, 'raindrops' also fall on the Christians... at least on those who remain true to the Bible. It was so under Hitler and under Stalin and Russian communism. Right-wing fascists, national-socialist dictators, and left-wing communists might be fierce opponents ideologically. Still, they are united in their hatred of everything to do with God and the Bible. "They form an alliance against You," the psalmist says. Hatred of Israel is hatred of the God of Israel. Christian anti-Semitism, Muslim anti-Semitism, left-wing and right-wing anti-Semitism, humanistic anti-Semitism: whatever the reasoning behind it is: the common goal is to finally get rid of the Jewish people and today of the State of Israel.

Praise God, nowadays other voices are heard as well. Also, in the Muslim world. Look, for instance, at the Abraham

Accords. It came unexpectedly. Israel and the United Arab Emirates concluded a bi-lateral agreement under supervision of the US. This was quite exceptional because Israel maintained only diplomatic ties in the Middle East with Jordan and Egypt. The deal is called *The Abraham Accords* after the common ancestor Abraham of both Jews and Arabs. Today many Muslim states have established new diplomatic ties with Israel.

The prophetic return of the Jewish people back to the Promised land of Israel is actually the greatest sign of hope the world has ever seen. Pointing towards the future when one day peace and righteousness will flow forth from Jerusalem into the whole world.

So let's pray that the prophecy of *Isaiah 2:2-4* will come true very soon:

- In the last days, the mountain of the Lord's Temple (Mount Zion, the Temple Mount) will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it.
- Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the Temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us His ways so that we may walk in His paths."
- The Law (Torah) will go out from Zion, the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
- He (the Messiah of Israel, the great Son of David, the King of kings and Lord of Lords) will judge between the nations and settle disputes for many peoples.
- They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

Raiders of the Lost Scroll

■ Kay Wilson

Israeli Tour Guide | Author | Cartoonist

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls months before the birth of the modern state of Israel was arguably the greatest archaeological and historical find in history. Not only did it verify that the land of Israel had been the national homeland of the Jewish people for millennia, but it also confirmed the authenticity of the Bible. The Hebrew scrolls have been dated to be two thousand years old and contained the same unchanged text that was passed on throughout the generations.

A similar important historical discovery caused waves to sweep throughout Israel and the world a few months ago, when fragments of ancient Biblical scrolls, and other treasures, were found in caves on the cliffs that hug the Dead Sea. Many are calling this Israel's biggest archaeological find since the Dead Sea Scrolls. Dr Eitan Klein, the archaeologist who led the digs, is now a household name in Israel. He has also won the affectionate title 'Indiana Jones' due to the risks incurred by him and his team in salvaging the scrolls.

The discovery of the fragments involved a plot worthy of a Hollywood blockbuster. Klein mapped it all out using a fascinating combination of gathering intelligence from Bedouin informers, cutting-edge technology and sheer courage required to rappel hundreds of meters to reach the entrance of the caves with an abyss hovering below.

Before the first shovel of earth was unturned, Klein and the Israel Antiquities Authority set up a network of Bedouin informants to retrieve intelligence about the theft of Israeli antiquities. Not only did Klein have to squeeze out information from convicted antiquities thieves who, as Bedouin, are people loyal to their tribe, he also had to work with the Israeli police, Interpol and even the FBI. This is because looted artefacts can eventually end up in museums as far away as Paris, London and New York.

After gathering the necessary intelligence, Klein used an ‘air force’ of drones that could photograph in such a fine resolution that it was possible to measure the



Fragments of the newly discovered Dead Sea Scroll were found in a desert cave. | Photo: Flash90

specifications of the caves and retrieve accurate imagery of up to an astonishing one centimetre. The state-of-the-art drones came with a fully autonomous functioning mode which meant no internet connection was required, which is an absolute necessity when mapping the remote and unforgiving desert. It was thanks to this 'air force' of drones that a 6000-year-old mummified girl was also discovered even before any digging had begun.

The centre of the excavations was the ‘Cave of Horrors,’ chillingly named seventy years ago when thirty skeletons from the Bar Kochba period were found there. Perching over an abyss, the cave was the home of Jews in rebellion hiding from the cruel Romans until, with nowhere to escape to, they eventually starved to death.

These latest finds also date to the Bar Kochba rebellion of 132 CE. For the most part, the scroll fragments came from

the books of the prophets Zechariah and Nahum. Unlike the earlier Dead Sea Scrolls, or the fragments discovered previously from the Bar Kochba period (in which the leader asks for a lulav to celebrate the festival of Sukkoth), these newly discovered pieces were not written in Hebrew; they were all in Greek. The only exception was the tetragrammaton, the four-letter Hebrew word for the most holy name of God. It is a name so sacred that, even today, it is rendered unpronounceable by Jewish people for fear of desecrating His name. The fact that Greek could have been a lingua franca, and yet Jewish people still insisted on writing the unutterable name in Hebrew, is remarkable. No matter what the surrounding culture, the God of Israel, was always the God of the Hebrews. So much so that the Jewish people stuck stubbornly to their beliefs and creeds in the face of a cruel Roman Empire bent on destroying them.

Who Wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls?

■ Biblical Archeological Society

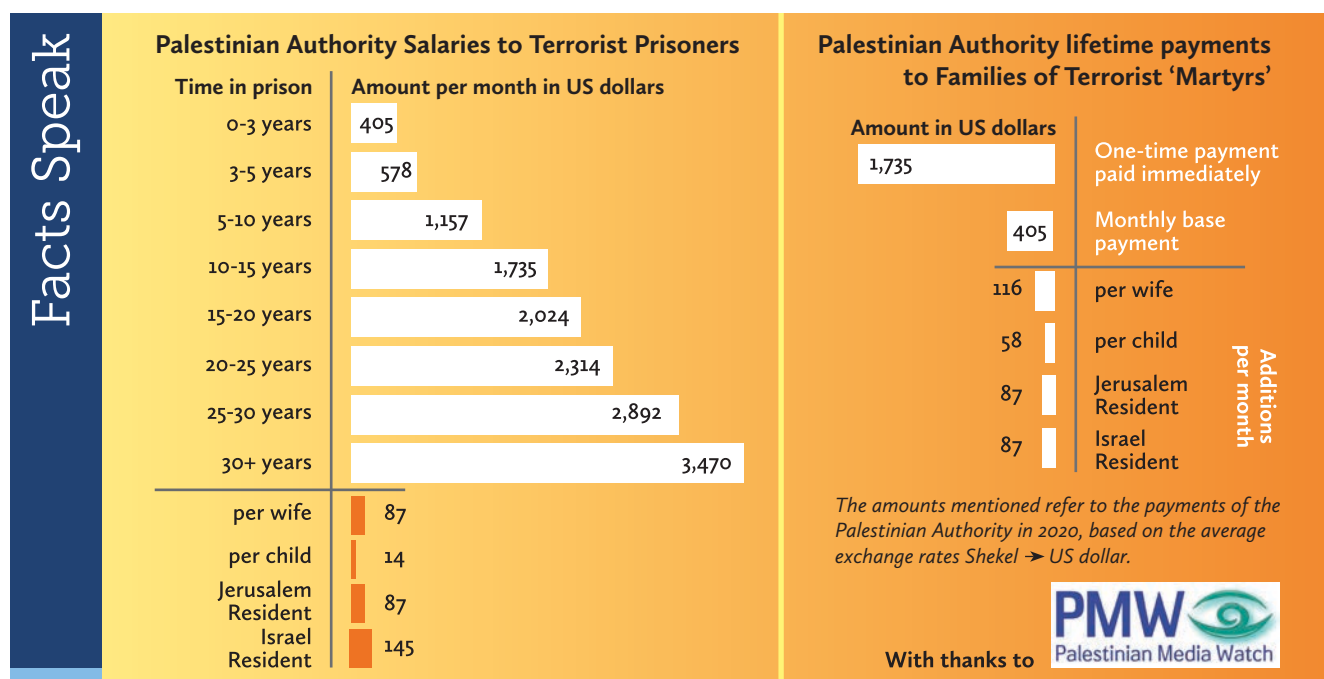
A recent computer analysis of handwriting from the Great Isaiah Scroll—one of the longest and best preserved of the Dead Sea Scrolls—found the 54-column text was produced by two different scribes who apparently worked in shifts to complete the task.

Researchers from the University of Groningen in the Netherlands, used artificial intelligence (AI) technology to train their computers to detect minute differences in the shape, styling, and curvature of the thousands of letters written on the scroll parchment. Although the styles of the letters appear nearly identical to the naked eye, the AI analysis revealed the work of two distinct scribal hands,

with the second scribe taking over from the first about midway through the manuscript. Given the close similarity in penmanship, the researchers believe the two scribes likely received the same training or were even peers within the same scribal school.

The researchers also believe that such analyses may also help answer a number of unresolved questions about the scrolls. For example, given that the Great Isaiah Scroll is securely dated by radiocarbon to the second century B.C.E., the AI-based handwriting analysis could potentially identify other scrolls written in a similar style and therefore likely produced at about the same time. Similarly, AI analysis of the handwriting found on the more than 40,000 scroll fragments could help scholars finally piece together at least some of the 900 scroll manuscripts from which the fragments originated.

Hidden away nearly 2,000 years ago in desert caves adjacent to the ruins of Qumran along the shores of the Dead Sea, the Dead Sea Scrolls, first discovered by local Bedouin in 1947, include biblical manuscripts like the Great Isaiah Scroll, but also previously unknown sectarian writings likely associated with the early Jewish community who lived at Qumran. The scrolls revolutionised scholarly understandings of early Judaism during the Second Temple period and provided new information about the varieties of Jewish thought that flourished at the time.



The Jewish Brigade in WWII

Tortured in Nazi concentration camps, these individuals survived to fight back. Many had lost relatives, who were assumed to have been gassed and slaughtered.

‘I am greatly satisfied,’ declared General Mark Clark, the US 5th Army commander, emphasising “that the Jewish people, who have suffered so terribly at the hands of the Nazis, should now be represented by this frontline fighting force.” Speaking in March 1945 from his headquarters in Italy, he was referring to the new Jewish Brigade, whose vehicles, arms and uniforms bore the Star of David and who had become a vital and operational military force under him.

Led by its initial commander, Brigadier EF Benjamin, the soldiers of the Jewish Brigade, fought alongside troops of other nations. “Tough, tanned and thirsting for revenge,” one military correspondent put it, “these Jewish soldiers have something personal to fight for. Tortured in Nazi concentration camps, these individuals survived to fight back. Many had lost relatives, who were assumed to have been gassed and slaughtered.”

Finally, in that month of March 1945, side by side with British and American forces, they held their own against the Germans.

“The Brigade members have killed Nazis and suffered casualties as well. They have proven on the field of battle what the Jew can do,” Clark powerfully concluded.

The American general saw his Jewish brethren as superb fighters, but he did not realise that this Jewish Brigade was the first ‘world-accepted’ entity of the State of Israel, which was to be born in 1948.

Only by reading the regular daily newspapers and weekly English-language Jewish papers from the English countries can one experience what a ‘Jewish army’ meant. However, behind the scenes, even greater strides were being taken to move the mandate out of British hands into those of the budding UN, born in San Francisco in May 1945.

Seventy-four years later, through war and peace, incredible achievements and terrible tragedies, we are the proud citizens of the State of Israel.

In the latter part of that year, even with the war over, the numbers of the Holocaust victims being made known and the unimaginable sights of the survivors and the dead carcasses in the former concentration camps, a poll of American citizens indicated that 55% were familiar with the discussion about permitting the Jews to settle in Palestine.

Some 76% were in favour; 7% opposed. How could the thinking of Americans be changed so ‘settlement’ was transformed to permitting the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine?

From various locales, the champions of our people arose.

A southern American editor, Ralph McGill, wrote after a month-long mission to Nuremberg, Cairo and Palestine.



The 1st battalion of the Jewish Brigade on parade. | Photo: Army Film & Photographic Unit

“In the Holy Land, a sharply etched, living and breathing, hard-working and productive, deeply rooted Jewish life exists all up and down the country. It will not be blown away by the gales of power politics. It has proved to be practical by any standard of measure.”

He first brought this message to the public in an address on 17 March 1946. His six articles describing what he had just seen were syndicated in the US, Canada and Great Britain in the spring of that year. His basic conclusions: “objections to Jewish migration into Palestine ridiculous; Jews there have built up the country; 80% of survivor Jews in displaced persons’ camps want to go to Palestine; plenty of room for them – Palestine solution to the problem.”

From his return after his Middle East mission until November 1947, he wrote numerous articles, spoke over the radio constantly, and participated in many national events arranged by the American Christian Conference on Palestine. At Boston’s Symphony Hall on 20 November 1946, 1,000 people were present to hear

Senator Owen Brewster of Maine; James G. McDonald, who became the US’ first ambassador to Israel and Dr Harry Atkinson, a founder of American Christian Palestine Committee and Ralph McGill. The radio carried the event to the entire area from Boston south to New York City. Since McGill was the only one that night who had actually seen both the DP camps in Europe and Palestine up close, the crowd hung on his every word. “The Britains have said that without Jewish industries in Palestine, the British could not have held out during the early years of WWII. Furthermore, without the 60,000 Palestine Jewish troops in the allied forces and the Jewish Brigade itself, many American generals believe the war would have continued on much longer.” A Tennessee country boy in his youth, McGill

stressed “never seen harder working farmers than the Jews...nor better farms.” He described the modern cities in the country and factories “wherefrom cleanup forces to executives all were Jewish.” He concluded that until Palestine problem worked out, “we cannot be comfortable calling ourselves a Christian nation.”

Behind the trip to the Holy Land of McGill and his writings and addresses throughout the US stood Herbert Bayard Swope. Swope, head of the Overseas News Agency, had sent McGill abroad to get ‘the real story of Palestine.’ The first American Pulitzer Prize Winner and a leading Zionist, always out of the spotlight, this journalist and financier knew well that in 1938 McGill was present in Vienna when Hitler led the Nazis as they marched into the city and took over Austria.

Even before the war began, after being one of the few Americans to see Hitler, McGill called for the establishment of a Jewish state.

Dr Shulamit Schwartz Nardi, who worked closely with Dr Abba Hillel Silver, handling publications in the 1940s to make the case for an Israel, including the publication and distribution of a million copies of James McDonald’s book on Palestine Jewish farming, once told me that Swope played a role in the 29 November 1947, vote which can never be documented because of the manner in which he conducted his affairs.

She also told me that perhaps the greatest moment in American Zionist history was when, in October 1947, Dr Silver, not David Ben-Gurion, opened the debate at the UN in Flushing Meadow, New York, on the future of a Jewish state. Great and lesser-known figures worked hand in hand so that the vote on 29 November 1947 would favour the UN Partition Plan. Seventy-four years later, through war and peace, incredible achievements and terrible tragedies, we are the proud citizens of the State of Israel – so may it ever be.

This article was originally written by David Geffen and published by The Jerusalem Post (www.jpost.com).

Short News

Jews and Tunisia



We read from Mokhtar Essid (from Tunisia, connected with the Cornerstone Foundation) that there is reason for great concern about the Jewish population in Tunisia. A summary of what he writes: “The Tunisian president stirs up hatred against Israel and the Jews. As one might expect, antisemitism increases, the hatred against Jews is growing. About a month ago he accused the Jews of theft. He made the lives of the Jews miserable by ordering the put up of pro-Palestinian signs on the island of Djerba, where approximately 1,500 Jews live. He even went so far as to change the names of the Jewish Quarters into Islamic names. A recent series of antisemitic incidents against the Jews in Tunisia is a direct result of the sedition by the president and the Tunisian media, who have become hostile against Israel and the Jewish people. This has never happened before in Tunisia, where the Jews were always defended and were simply referred to as ‘Tunisians’ and not as Jews.” | Photo: Synagogue in Tunis by S. Frantzman

Study Shows Junk Food Harms Children’s Bones



Ultra-processed foods are proven for the first time to severely damage skeletal development. Parents may want to consider limiting their children’s consumption of ultra-processed packaged foods not only because these foods can lead to obesity and diabetes. They may also stunt bone growth. A definitive link between ultra-processed foods and reduced bone quality in the development stage was revealed by a team of researchers from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The study, from the Department of Biochemistry, Food Science and Nutrition at the university’s Faculty of Agriculture, was published in the journal Bone Research.

The conclusion was that even in reduced amounts, ultra-processed foods can have a definite negative impact on skeletal growth. These findings are significant because children and adolescents are intense consumers of ultra-processed food. According to some estimates, half of all American kids eat junk food every day. | Photo: Unsplash

The End of Europe's Romance with Palestine Terror?

■ Gerald Steinberg

In recent years, EU recognition of the damage done by and the need for independent oversight of Europe's relationships with NGOs in Israel has been increasing.

But beyond the logos, the details of the deep and often personal European relationships with the leaders of influential Palestinian and Israeli NGOs were and remain closely guarded state secrets on the level of nuclear weapons. This strange and fundamental departure from the transparency that is central to democratic norms explains why year after year, the members of an NGO network linked to a terror organisation, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), are among the main recipients of European funding. Since 2011, European governments have provided at least 200 million euros to these organisations, including 40 million from the European Union, and probably more from subcontracting that is not reported and from grants that remain hidden.

The arrest and indictment of a number of four individuals with high-level positions in the benignly named Health Workers Committee, who are charged with diverting NGO funds directly to terror groups, shines a bright spotlight on this core dimension of the NGO industry. After many years of hiding the details and denying the extensive evidence of links published in NGO Monitor research reports, it will now be harder for the European officials in charge of the funding to continue to claim "we did not know," "the evidence you provide is not absolute proof," or "we do not need to examine the recipients because other countries and the UN are funding the same groups."

In official correspondence and awkward meetings with European ambassadors and other officials, they offered rehearsed justifications for funding for Palestinian and Israel NGOs leading anti-Israel 'apartheid' demonisation. Often reading uncomfortably from pre-cooked slogans, they have claimed (without credibility) that their governments only support projects and not organisations, that the NGO links to the PFLP are outdated and invalid, and even that the PFLP is a legitimate political organisation. The long-standing relationships between PFLP officials and their European



Palestinian militants from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). | Photo: Flash90

sponsors, including leaders of powerful church groups such as Pax Christi, are never acknowledged.

One year ago, Olivér Várhelyi, EU Commissioner for Neighborhood and Enlargement (which has jurisdiction over some of the seven distinct EU funding mechanisms), ordered a comprehensive investigation of terror ties involving NGO grantees, and declared that such funding "will not be tolerated." That report is expected very soon.

In addition, the European Parliament's committee responsible for budgetary issues ('Discharge') recently told EU officials to "thoroughly verify" that funds are not "allocated or linked to any cause or form of terrorism and/or religious and political radicalisation." Grant funds that went to any person or organisation with terrorist ties must be "proactively recovered, and recipients involved are excluded from future union funding." To the degree that the officials implement this policy, the results will require a fundamental change in the NGO funding process.

In the Netherlands, the foreign and development

ministers initially rejected the information showing clear links between their funding for the UAWC and the officials charged with the 2019 murder of Rena Schnerb but later were forced to retract their claims. Under parliamentary questioning, they acknowledged that Dutch funding paid part of the salaries and suspended grants pending an investigation by a private firm, which has begun.

These and similar developments in other countries suggest that after many years, the results of free-flowing European support to the NGO industry, without transparency and due diligence, are becoming too costly. Perhaps as a result of the most recent developments and arrests, the careless and dangerous European NGO subcontracting will be reduced or stopped. But even if this happens, the immense damage resulting from these policies will take many years to repair.

Gerald M. Steinberg is a professor of political science at Bar-Ilan University and president of the Institute for NGO Research.

This article first appeared in Israel Hayom.

The Fourth Gaza War

Continued from page 1

Then there was the Cornet anti-tank missile, a deadly weapon also in use by Hezbollah in Lebanon. Both Hamas and PIJ used the Iranian-supplied Cornet missile several times during the current war, resulting in the death of at least two Israelis, one of them an IDF soldier.

Hamas also used a new type of rocket named Ayyash. The missile has a range of 250 kilometres, and Hamas used it to stop flights to Israel when it shot the Ayyash in the direction of Ben Gurion Airport and the new Ramon Airport in the vicinity of Eilat.

Israel seemed to realise that all these changes on the Palestinian side required a different approach because this war could be the testing ground for a much bigger conflict in the future. For this reason, the Israeli military bombed the military- and more civil infrastructure of Hamas and PIJ to smithereens and also tried to assassinate as many commanders of the two organisations as possible.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and the Israeli Air Force (IAF) also introduced a new tactic never seen in the history of war.

Israel knew that Hamas, with Iranian help and funding,

had created an underground city where it stored weapons and was in use as a bunker for Hamas operatives in case of war or other emergencies.

At the same time, the IDF didn't want to make the same fault as in 2014 when it lost soldiers during operations inside Gaza trying to blow up terror tunnels.

Thus the Israeli military used very different methods to destroy what it calls 'the Metro' Hamas' reinforced underground tunnel network.

After four days of fighting, some 160 warplanes and assault helicopters conducted a massive attack on the tunnels in the northern Gaza Strip simultaneously. According to the IDF, the aircraft used 450 missiles and dropped 80 tons of explosives on the tunnel complex. The whole operation took a little more than 40 minutes and has reportedly killed hundreds of terrorists.

A similar operation was later used to destroy another stretch of the 'Metro' complex. Israel knows that the improved skills and weapons of Hamas and PIJ are the result of the Iranian involvement in Gaza.

How Do We Know?

Hamas leaders and PIJ officials talked about it openly, most recently Ramez al-Halabi, one of PIJ leaders. During

an interview with al-Ahd TV in Iraq, Al-Halabi said that his organisation gets its weapons, money, and even food from the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps in Iran.

The Telegraph in the United Kingdom, citing unnamed intelligence officials, confirmed that Iran is helping Hamas in all sorts of ways to improve its military capabilities, especially when it comes to the manufacturing of missiles.

So, the bigger picture of this latest Gaza War is that Israel is not only fighting two Palestinian terror groups.

According to the IDF, the aircraft used 450 missiles and dropped 80 tons of explosives on the tunnel complex.

The real battle here is against Iran that has vowed to destroy the Jewish state and is trying to achieve this in different ways. It is done by providing assistance to its proxies in Israel and by stirring up unrest among Palestinian Arabs living in Judea and Samaria and Israeli Arabs. In addition, via Hezbollah, Iran has been caught trying to create new terror groups in Judea and Samaria as well in northern Israel.

Six Months in the Promised Land

■ Anna Klechenova
Project Manager | First Home in the Homeland | The Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI)

We'd like to tell you about three olim families who made Aliyah via the First Home in the Homeland programme in October 2020 – how they are doing now, and what are their impressions of Israel are.

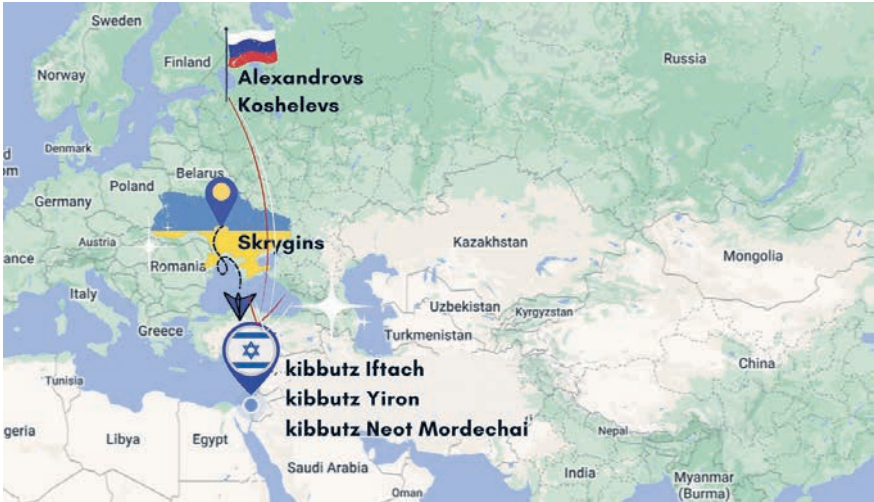
Do you remember the *Little Prince* story and its main character's words that "we are responsible for what we have tamed"? For us, providing assistance is not a single action we take and soon forget about. We are in touch with all of the families that we have helped to start their new lives in the Holy Land.

We spoke to the three families mentioned in this article on the eve of the Holocaust Remembrance Day, and there was something sacred about it. On the one hand, being a Jew and being an Israeli is something to take pride in, but on the other hand, it is far from easy. When you are planning your Aliyah, you are conjuring idealistic images in your mind. But what will you be faced with after landing in Israel? Who will take care of you and who will accompany you?

The Skrygina Family



Ekaterina Skrygina (43), who made Aliyah from Ukraine with her husband Georgii (44) and two children, Elizaveta and Alexander (13 and 11), recounted: "Marina, our coordinator in Kibbutz Iftach, has become a kind of second mother for us. She is close by all the time, so we feel more confident in starting to get to know this country better and believe in it. I moved to Israel because my relatives lived there. Knowing they are close helps me to go on. My grandmother has carefully preserved family traditions for all of us, and we must share them with our children! That's why we are here. After six months, we continue to learn Hebrew. Currently, we work in a branch of the world's leading irrigation company 'Netafim', which



is located in our kibbutz. I also plan to take some courses for mastering my professional engineering skills!"

The Koshelev Family



Anton Koshelev (35), his wife Asia (34) and their daughters (9 and 1) made Aliyah from St. Petersburg. The move to Israel was very important for Anton because the Nazis murdered almost all his distant relatives during World War II.

"The First Home in the Homeland Programme helped us a lot: we could learn Hebrew and feel safe."

During his childhood, the fear of oppression was still present, and this was; therefore, the family kept it a secret that they are Jewish. Despite all of the difficulties, after more than 70 years passed, Anton and his family eventually found themselves in his historical homeland on Kibbutz Neot Mordechai. "Our daughters are really happy here. It is a great place to grow up! Every month something new takes place in

our kibbutz, which brings us closer to one another and Israel. Living on a kibbutz is a good experience for our family. It makes us feel like we belong to Jewish traditions. We continue studying in Ulpan (*school for intensive study of Hebrew*), and we are improving our Hebrew from day to day. Anton has already found a job in his speciality, and I work in a shoe store on weekends," said Asia.

The Alexandrov Family

Another family from St. Petersburg are the Alexandrovs. Maxim (34) and Margarita (30) made Aliyah with their daughter Sofia (8) and are very happy to have done it. Now the family lives in Kibbutz Yiron. "The First Home in the Homeland Programme helped us a lot: we could learn Hebrew and feel safe. Our kibbutz coordinators provide 24-hour assistance to us." Margarita said they had already finished *Ulpan* and were considering getting a good education in Israel. At the moment, Margarita works at the kibbutz's dining room while Maxim is working at a furniture factory. After Sofia finishes third grade at school this year, they will move to the city. Maxim is looking for a new job as an electrician. Thanks to the programme, everything in their new life is going very well.

Margarita confessed that making Aliyah was a tribute to her ancestors. For her, belonging to the Jewish people meant being chosen. "After arriving here, my life has changed for the better!" she concluded.

It is a pleasure to know that all these families feel comfortable in their Homeland. Thank you for your support, love and kindness!

Please support the *First Home in the Homeland Programme*. Assisting a family in the programme costs €230 per month. Please complete the coupon on the back page. Any amount is welcome!

Overview of our projects

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

Aliyah

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



Hineni Soup Kitchen

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



Holocaust Survivors

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



Christian Friends of Israeli Communities (CFOIC)

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



Food Parcel Campaign Ukraine

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



Arab Christians

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



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

Emergency Situation in Israel - Your Prayers and Support is Needed

Christians for Israel Staff

In recent weeks, violence has escalated in Israel. What began with riots on the Temple Mount has, in a matter of days, degenerated into a violent conflict, with over a thousand rockets fired from Gaza at civilian targets in Israel. Israel is trying to bring peace back to the country, but the situation is serious. That is why we call on you to pray and take action.

What Can You Pray For?

- Pray for peace and tranquillity. Pray that the riots will stop and that the rain of rockets from Gaza will cease.
- Pray for honest reporting on Israel. No country in the world would accept rockets being fired at civilians. Pray that the media will see this and report on it fairly.
- Pray for the innocent men, women and children in Gaza who are being used as human shields by the terrorist organisation Hamas. Rockets are fired from flats, hospitals and schools. When Israel defuses these rocket

- installations, there are unintended civilian casualties. Pray that this escalation of violence will stop.
- Pray for the people of Israel. The rockets are not only targeting southern Israel but are now even reaching Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. There's great panic. Pray that these rockets do not hit their targets. Pray, especially for Holocaust survivors and small children, for whom it is a traumatic experience to have to flee to shelters again and again.
 - Pray for wisdom for the Israeli government, army and border police to deal with this difficult situation.
 - The Bible calls us to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. In doing so, we trust that God has everything in His hands.

What Can You Do?

We want to provide emergency assistance through our existing projects in Israel.
The organisation Hineni in Jerusalem is going to

distribute emergency food packages to poor people in southern Israel who have already been hit hard by the Corona Crisis and who do not have the means to buy food for a longer period of time in the shelters. Hineni intends to distribute these food packages in areas such as Ashkelon, Sderot, Ashdod: places that have been hit hardest. This aid will still be necessary when the current conflict is over.

The Israeli organisation Keren Hayesod provides emergency assistance to the families directly affected by the rocket attacks. Some homes have been destroyed, and people have been traumatised by the ongoing rockets. Keren Hayesod provides initial emergency assistance, such as accommodation in hotels (for families whose homes were destroyed), clothing, toys for the children, mental support and trauma counselling. Additional shelters are being built, and defibrillators are being purchased for initial medical care. | Photos: Flash90

Will You Help?



YES! I Want to Support Christians for Israel

CHRISTIANS FOR ISRAEL MINISTRY

- ☐ My donation for ministry costs, print & post

SOCIAL WELFARE PROJECTS

- ☐ Food Parcel Campaign Ukraine - € 10 | US \$11 ea
- ☐ First Home in the Homeland
- ☐ First Baptist Church Bethlehem
- ☐ Hineni - Soup Kitchen
- ☐ Holocaust Survivors - "I'm not Alone"
- ☐ Christian Friends of Israeli Communities (CFOIC)

ALIYAH - BRING THE JEWS HOME

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