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CHRISTIANS FOR
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INTERNATIONAL

Understanding Israel and world events from a Biblical perspective

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“Deliver Israel, O God,
from all their troubles!”

Psalms 25:22

Israel at War

Colophon

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

Mission

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

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How Do We Respond to Evil?

■ Andrew Tucker

International Editor | Christians for Israel

The whole world witnessed the brutal savagery on Saturday 7 October. Militant Islamists from Gaza broke through Israel's border and murdered, raped, and mistreated thousands of Israelis and foreigners. Around 240 were kidnapped and taken as hostages back into Gaza. The scenes of wanton violence and destruction shocked the world.

These people were attacked because they were Jews. More Jews were killed in a single day than on any other day since the Holocaust.

Many people have been warning for years that something like this would happen. It is incredible that the Israeli leadership was so ill-prepared.

This is a game-changer. The myth of Israel's invincibility has been shattered. So, too, has the myth of the 'two states' solution.

The attack was not an isolated incident but part of a larger strategy. This was a well-prepared and highly coordinated attack. Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) are extremely sophisticated, well-organised and well-funded entities.

It involves and connects many Islamist entities throughout the Middle East and Northern Africa—and beyond—founded on principles of jihad: the use of force to impose Islamism. As the Hamas Charter makes clear, the killing of Jews is central to their ideologically-driven self-identity.

Iran and Qatar are playing a central role in all of this. The revolutionary regime in Tehran has been financing and supporting its proxies in the region, such as Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), for decades. There is no way Hamas and PIJ could have carried out this attack without Iran's close involvement.

Qatar is also responsible for this war. It is Hamas' largest financial sponsor. It

has provided a safe haven for Hamas leaders to live in luxury while their own people in Gaza suffer.

The war is developing on several fronts. Iranian proxy Hezbollah in Lebanon shares the Iranian regime's goal of destroying Israel and has over 150,000 rockets in place directed against Israel. This is developing into a multi-front war in which Israel must deal with attacks from the south, north and east.

The goal of Israel's complicated and difficult ground offensive is to rescue the hostages and root out and destroy Hamas. Tragically, given Hamas and PIJ deliberately use their own people as human shields, thousands of Palestinians have been killed. Many, perhaps half the number, are Hamas terrorists. There will be many more casualties.

Israel's enemies are using psychological warfare to undermine Western confidence in the Jewish State of Israel. Dr Irwin Mansdorf describes this as follows:

"When it comes to psychological warfare (often called PSYOPS), various 'playbooks' have been used over the years. Hamas, an ideologically driven Islamist terror organisation, has used several of these tactics. Most notably, they manipulate the 'victim' role to garner support from world opinion. When facing a stronger force like Israel, this strategy (also known as 'psychological asymmetry') has allowed them to undertake actions that can be classified as war crimes, and they then take cover under a blitz of distorted information that focuses on Israel as the guilty party. In essence, the asymmetry arises when the stronger military party, Israel, is forced to cease its operations, preventing it from attaining legitimate operational goals."

It is critical that we pray into this situation with an understanding that the Enemy of the Creator of this

universe is doing all in his power to destroy the apple of God's eye, to confuse the nations, and disrupt and distort God's plans for redemption.

As Christians, we have the duty to engage in spiritual warfare. As the Apostle Paul says in *Ephesians* 3:

"His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to the eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord."

He continues in chapter 6 of the letter to the *Ephesians*:

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

The Lord God of Israel watches over His people. The shepherd of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps (*Psalms* 121). The enemies of Israel will be defeated.

Let us pray that the spirit of God will work in the lives of all:

- for the government and people of Israel in their loss and grief. For the families who have lost loved ones or whose next of kin are missing or captive.
- for the people of Gaza—that they also will be protected. For the leaders of Hamas and PIJ—that there will be massive repentance and turning from evil
- that the Jewish people, the Christian world and all the nations of earth will turn to the living God and put their trust and confidence in Him, not in their own strength and wisdom.

Above all, let us pray with increased urgency for the coming of the Messiah of Israel, who will judge the nations, tend to His people of Israel, and wipe the tears from every eye.

Only then will evil be overcome, and there will be true peace on earth.

Prayer Points

Israel

- Pray for Israel with the words of *Psalms* 27. "The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid? (...) Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then I will be confident."
- Pray against the demonic forces that are behind the hatred and destruction of Hamas and other enemies of Israel.
- Pray for the healing of Israel. Healing of the wounded, of those traumatised, and of those who feel overwhelmed by grief.
- Pray for liberation for all the hostages who are being held by Hamas. Pray also for their family members who are in great distress.
- Pray for Israel's protection on all borders. Pray that God's angels will surround the land and fight for Israel. Pray also for wisdom for the government and

the commanders of the IDF to make the right choices. Pray that they will turn to God for wisdom and that He will guide them.

Israel & the Nations

- If something happens in Israel, hatred and violence against Jews increases worldwide. Pray for God's presence and for protection for the Jewish community in your country and around the world.
- Pray that nations will choose to support Israel during this difficult time. Pray also that the truth will be shared by the media. In many news outlets, the news is not presented objectively. Pray for objective reporting without bias.

Christians for Israel

- Pray that Christians will be friends of Israel. Not all Christians are comfortable with this, and some are among the first to condemn Israel.

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

The Aftermath of the *Black Shabbat* Massacre

■ By Yochanan Visser
Christians for Israel Correspondent in Israel

On 7 October, a disaster occurred in Israel that will reverberate in the collective psyche of Israelis for decades to come.

Many compare the carnage that Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) caused in southern Israel that day to the attack on the Twin Towers in New York on 11 September 2001.

Israel now has its own 9/11, it is said and this is more than true. One could even argue that Israel will never be the same nation as it was before 10/7.

Before that *Black Shabbat*, Israel was going through a crisis that deeply divided the Jewish nation and, according to some, could have ended in civil war.

However, on 7 October, that crisis was over in one fell swoop and what happened next in Israel is the exact opposite of what occurred in the nine months before that awful day.

The divisions gave way to an unprecedented unity even by Israeli standards and many people immediately took action.

The war that started then is still developing and could end in a major regional conflict but what is certain for the Israelis is that the IDF will win this war.

The Israeli army must win because the current war is once again about the survival of the state of Israel and it is for this reason that some say this is the Second War of Independence.

It was these heroes who in many cases prevented Hamas and PIJ from carrying out their plan to advance into Judea and occupy entire cities.

I spoke to many Israelis about what they felt when it became clear to them what Hamas and PIJ were doing in southern Israel.

Most interviewees said that at first, they couldn't understand it and immediately wondered how this could happen.

How could the Middle East's strongest military and intelligence services be surprised in such a way? they asked themselves.

However, the questions about how this could happen will have to wait until after the war, as they soon realised, there was work to be done!

As the full extent of the tragedy began to emerge, many Israelis left their homes and anyone with a gun rushed to the communities in the south that were then the scene of genocide and crimes against humanity on a large scale.

It was these heroes who in many cases prevented Hamas and PIJ from carrying out their plan to advance into Judea and occupy entire cities.

Take for example Yair Golan, an off-duty IDF general who was previously a Knesset member for the far-left Meretz party.

Golan was at home when word got out about the invasion of southern Israel and without a second thought he put on his IDF uniform, grabbed his gun, and rushed to the Gaza area in his Toyota Yaris.



People light candles in Jerusalem to remember the victims who were murdered by Hamas terrorists and to remember the hostages. | Photo: Flash90

The former deputy head of the IDF's chiefs of staff drove to the site where the Nova Music festival was held next to kibbutz Be'eri as it turned into Israel's killing fields.

There Golan saved the lives of young music lovers who tried to escape the massacre on foot as they ran through the fields to the nearby forest.

After the Israeli government officially declared war on the Palestinian terrorist movements in Gaza, a spontaneous popular movement emerged of thousands of volunteers who wanted to do something.

on social media in which the soldiers were seen singing religious songs and dancing together.

Other Israelis volunteered to help identify the remains of often burned victims of the 7 October massacre.

These volunteers later gave testimonies about what they had seen and, some had to seek psychological help because of the trauma they had endured.

Other Israelis with a background in psychological healthcare volunteered to counsel the massacre survivors and held sessions with young children who had witnessed the gruesome murder of their parents.

There is one overriding belief among the Israeli public at the time of writing this article and that is that the IDF must now finish the job and eradicate the evil that has engulfed Israel for decades.

Hamas and PIJ, as well as Hezbollah and their sponsor Iran, will be given a lesson they will never be able to forget.

Whether this will put an end to their conviction that Israel will have to be wiped off the map is highly questionable, but Gaza will never again be a place where terrorists can freely work on their evil plans for the Jewish state.

That was another factor that drove many after 7 October, they wanted to do something, it didn't matter what as long as it could help the victims, the people, the army, and the state.

Even from abroad, expats came back to Israel and not just to volunteer in the army but to cook for the soldiers or the evacuees as my daughter did with some friends.

The approximately three hundred thousand IDF reservists who had been called up for active duty under order eight (*Tzav Shmoneh*) now received assistance from reservists who had not been called up.

Among them was former Prime Minister Naftali Bennett who also reported to a base near Gaza but was sent back due to his status as an ex-prime minister and because his safety could not be guaranteed.

Bennett then volunteered as Israel's unofficial spokesman for the foreign media.

The soldiers waiting for the order to enter Gaza were often seen in videos demonstrating unprecedented determination and high morale that was motivated by the Jewish religion and tradition.

Numerous video clips were posted



Major General Yair Golan | Photo: Screenshot from X

Hamas: We Want Permanent War with Israel

■ By Joshua Marks

“Hamas’s goal is not to run Gaza and to bring it water and electricity and such” but to “completely overthrow the situation,” said a member of the terror group’s political bureau.

Hamas has no interest in governing Gaza but wants a never-ending war with Israel, members of the terrorist group told *The New York Times* in a feature piece published early November.

According to the Hamas leaders, that was one of the primary goals of their 7 October invasion of the northwestern Negev, in which thousands of armed terrorists massacred 1,400 people, mostly civilians, wounded over 5,000 others and took back to Gaza more than 200 hostages.

“I hope that the state of war with Israel will become permanent on all the borders and that the Arab world will stand with us,” Taher el-Nounou, a Hamas media adviser, told the US-based newspaper.

Khalil al-Hayya, a member of the terrorist group’s politburo in Qatar, said they planned the 7 October assault to “change the entire equation and not just

have a clash,” adding that “we succeeded in putting the Palestinian issue back on the table, and now no one in the region is experiencing calm.”

“Hamas’s goal is not to run Gaza and to bring it water and electricity and such,” said al-Hayya. “Hamas, the Qassam and the resistance woke the world up from its deep sleep and showed that this issue must remain on the table.”

He added: “This battle was not because we wanted fuel or labourers. It did not seek to improve the situation in Gaza. This battle is to completely overthrow the situation.”

Senior Hamas official Ghazi Hamad told Lebanon’s LBC TV on 24 October that the terror group would continue to carry out massacres like the one it carried out in southern Israel on 17 October until the Jewish state is destroyed.

“Israel is a country that has no place on our land. We must remove that country because it constitutes a security, military and political catastrophe to the Arab and Islamic nation, and must be finished,” said Hamad, according to a translation of the interview provided by the Middle East Media Research Institute.



Palestinian members of Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of the Hamas movement. | Photo Flash90

“We are not ashamed to say this, with full force,” he added.

Israel’s existence was “illogical,” he said, adding, “The existence of Israel is what causes all that pain, blood and tears.

“The Al-Aqsa Flood [Hamas’s name for

the 7 October mass terror attack] is just the first time, and there will be a second, a third, a fourth because we have the determination, the resolve and the capabilities to fight,” said Hamad.

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The Abraham Accords After the War

■ By Yariv Becher

Israel’s culture of innovation will help us win the war and build a new regional reality.

When we talk about the success of the Israeli innovation ecosystem, we are often asked how, in a relatively short period, a tiny country in the Middle East emerged as a global innovation powerhouse. To answer this, people often point to unique characteristics of Israeli culture that tend to breed entrepreneurship.

Among these characteristics is resilience. Israelis don’t shy away from risk, and when they don’t succeed, they learn from the experience and implement the lessons learned. For many Israeli entrepreneurs, success only comes after failure.

7 October was one of Israel’s most tragic days. The country will never be the same again. The real test, however, is how Israel responds and rebuilds. How do we make sure this novel venture called Israel will endure and succeed?

We will likely be analysing and dissecting the causes of the 7 October disaster and the Israeli response to it for years to come. But we can already say with confidence that Israel’s population, civil

society and various communities are unified in unprecedented support and compassion for their fellow Israelis. The immense mobilisation of volunteers, including high-tech executives and employees, exemplifies Israel’s agility, flexibility and ‘get-things-done’ spirit.

No less astonishing is the fact that, while many of the reservists called up and many of those who are volunteering come from the tech sector, that sector continues to serve its global customer base, professing that the Israeli tech industry delivers no matter what.

Hamas’s hideous massacre destroyed lives, families and communities. It also shattered preconceptions and predispositions. However long it will take for the war to end, it is clear that the day after, there will be a different reality. Many commentators share the opinion that, in the aftermath of the war, a new paradigm will be needed that takes a wider perspective integrating regional and international stakeholders. Just a few weeks ago—which now seems like a lifetime ago—we celebrated the third anniversary of the Abraham Accords against the backdrop of increasing reports of impending normalisation between Israel and Saudi Arabia. While current developments

have cooled these newly formed relations, the infrastructure behind them is still in place.

Over the past two years, Start-Up Nation Central has been working to build a foundation for regional relationships based on collaboration in innovation, believing that such activities will help these relationships withstand crises.

This was recently emphasised by Bahrain’s Finance Minister, Sheikh Salman bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, who said the Israel-Hamas war should not disrupt the normalisation initiated with Israel in 2020. He shared with *The Wall Street Journal*, “It’s extremely important in the region that we continue to build bridges. ... The people who should write the future are the builders in the region.”

Part of our innovation diplomacy has been to share the knowledge and experience Israel has accumulated over the years in developing a thriving innovation ecosystem via a structured, long-term process. This includes fostering entrepreneurship and cultivating a healthy risk-taking mindset. Accepting failure also plays a major part in founding a tech start-up. But the mindset is true for all such ventures.

I once heard an Israeli CEO say that

establishing the State of Israel was an innovation enterprise that embedded entrepreneurship in Israelis’ DNA. I completely agree. Like many start-ups that have faced hardship, we now need to mourn our failure. Israel should honour its dead, take care of their families and pray for the release of the hostages.

Then, we will need to stand up, learn from the tragedy and rebuild. Our partners in the region are looking at us to see if we will prevail despite this terrible blow.

The network of regional connections and relationships we have built is now dormant but not extinct. Dr Ali Rashid Al Nuaimi, Chairman of the Defense, Interior and Foreign Affairs Committee of the United Arab Emirates Federal National Council, rightfully said a few days ago, “The Abraham Accords are there to stay.”

When the time comes, and we hope it will come soon, we will work together with our friends and partners to create a new reality in which we will prosper together.

Yariv Becher is vice president of innovation diplomacy at Start-Up Nation Central and a former commercial attaché for Israel’s Ministry of Economy. Originally published at www.jns.org. Republished with permission.

The UN Secretary-General Should Retract or Resign

■ Danny Danon

António Guterres's moral equivalence between Israel and Hamas was neither moral nor just.

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres took office two years into my tenure as Israel's Ambassador to the United Nations. Over the years, I got to know him well. We talked on many occasions, worked together and navigated some challenging situations in the Middle East.

I respected Guterres for his extensive experience in diplomacy. It seemed to me at the time that he had a nuanced and insightful understanding of the complex and volatile situation in the Middle East. He remained committed to promoting dialogue and peaceful resolutions to conflicts.

However, his speech on 24 October to the UN Security Council on Israel's war against Hamas, followed by an attempted clarification the following day, was reprehensible. There can be no justification for his claims that the 7 October Hamas massacre "did not happen in a vacuum," clearly implying Israeli responsibility for the savage and inhuman attack on its own citizens.

Guterres appeared unaware of the fact that there is no justification for beheading babies, raping young girls, torturing children and their parents, tearing babies from their mother's wombs, burning children and the elderly alive, mutilating and dismembering bodies and desecrating the dead—no justification whatsoever!

While Guterres acknowledged that "nothing can justify the deliberate killing, injuring and kidnapping of civilians—or the launching of rockets against civilian targets," he then justified precisely that, not only with his 'vacuum' comment but with lengthy remarks on the "56 years of suffocating occupation" that the Palestinians have supposedly suffered.

I would like to suggest to the secretary-general that the facts may have escaped his attention. Israel does not occupy Gaza in any way. Israel exited Gaza in 2005 in the hopes that it would help promote peace, and tens of thousands of Israeli citizens were removed.

Instead of using this opportunity to build a better life for themselves, in 2006, the citizens of Gaza elected the terror organisation Hamas, whose sole ambition is the annihilation of Israel and the Jewish people. Every year since, without exception, Israel has experienced rounds of rocket fire targeting its civilians. Instead of creating a place of prosperity and peace, the Palestinians in Gaza



UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres speaking in New York City, 9 December 2020. | Photo: Shutterstock

created hell. The situation in which they now find themselves, and the war zone Gaza has become, rests squarely on the shoulders of Hamas and its supporters.

Guterres spoke of how the Palestinians have been "plagued by violence" and their economy "stifled." He failed to mention that the violence they are "plagued by" and their poor economic situation are the direct results of the government the people of Gaza elected to power. Hamas digs up water pipes and turns them into rockets; uses electricity meant for houses, hospitals and schools to power generators in their underground tunnels; and builds terror tunnels to target Israel's citizens rather than an underground transportation system.

Over the years, Gaza and Hamas have received billions of dollars in aid from multiple sources. From 2014 to 2020, numerous UN organisations sent almost \$4.5 billion to Gaza, including \$600 million just in 2020. Qatar has provided \$1.3 billion in aid to Gaza since 2012. These figures do not include the funds given to the Palestinian refugee agency UNRWA, which has received billions of dollars, most of which is supposedly meant to fund education initiatives, or to USAID, which has received millions for various projects in Gaza. No one knows how many of these billions have been stolen by Hamas for terror purposes, but the number must be very high indeed.

The international community should be rightfully outraged that the billions of dollars in aid that they have given to Gaza, which should have been used to build hospitals, schools, educational centres and other facilities for Gaza's citizens, have instead been rerouted to the Hamas underground terror infrastructure. Hamas should be held fully accountable by the international community, and certainly by the UN, for the billions of dollars in funds that

continue to pour in to aid civilians but are instead stolen by the terror group.

Given these indisputable facts, Guterres's statement was outrageous. He asserted a parity between Israel's defensive war against inhuman terror and the crimes of Hamas. Indeed, he essentially pardoned Hamas and took its side in the conflict.

There is only one way to deal with Hamas's evil: Calling it out for what it is and eliminating it. This is a defining moment in which moral clarity is required. Guterres failed to provide this clarity in the most spectacular manner possible. If, after all his years of public service, he cannot understand the difference between the victims of terror and the terrorists, then we have a serious issue at the United Nations.

I call on Secretary-General Guterres to retract his statement. At the very least, the outrage he has witnessed in response to his speech should indicate to him that the speech was neither moral nor just. If he does not retract and recognise that he was mistaken in his moral equivalence between a democratic state defending itself and a terror group that slaughtered 1,400 innocent civilians in an unprovoked attack, Israel will no longer be able to work with him.

It is our hope that Guterres will sincerely apologise and clarify that there is zero justification for the genocidal horrors perpetrated by Hamas. If he cannot do so, then he should resign from his position as head of an organisation that was established to prevent such atrocities. He has failed not only to prevent them but also, at the very least, to condemn them unequivocally.

Ambassador Danny Danon is a senior member of the Knesset and chairman of World Likud. He previously served as Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, minister of science and technology and deputy minister of defence. Originally published at www.jns.org. Republished with permission.

Victims of War

Murdered in their 'Saferoom'



Hamas terrorists murdered an entire young family in their home at Kibbutz Nir Oz on 7 October: Tamar Kedem Siman Tov; her husband, Yonatan (Johnny); her mother-in-law Carol Siman Tov; two 6-year-old daughters, Shahar and Arbel; and son Omer, aged 4. Tamar, 35, reportedly sent friends a message on WhatsApp saying, "Hi guys, we got into the shelter in our house, we're all going (sic) okay." An hour later, she stopped answering messages. It later became clear that terrorists had entered the protected room and slain the entire family.

Last Photo of Raz and Aviv

This is the last picture of Raz (4 years old) and Aviv (2 years old) Asher, which was taken by their mother



Doron as they took shelter in the safe room in their home and spent the time playing games. While the terrorists were in the house, their father Yoni (who was not at home) was still in contact with his family. Raz and Aviv, along with their mother Doron and grandmother were abducted to Gaza. When Yoni was unable to get in touch with his family, he located his wife's phone at 11:30 am and discovered that his family was near Khan Yunis in the Gaza Strip. He then saw a video on Telegram showing his family being put onto a cart by terrorists. Since then, he has not received any news about his family.

Beyond Words

Yossi Landau was a volunteer involved in the recovering of the victims in kibbutz Be'eri near Gaza. What he found there cannot be put into words. "The sight of the 20 children we found in the kibbutz was horrific. The terrorists had tied the hands of the children on their backs, then they horribly abused and beaten them. Then they stacked the children in two rows and burned them. How on earth can you do such a horrible thing?"



The Impact of Hamas Terror in Pictures

After the horrific acts of terror by Hamas on 7 October and the continuing attacks in the days that followed, the suffering in Israel is beyond comprehension. But the images and stories of the victims, the extent of the

devastation, fear, misery, pain, sorrow, death and destruction can be so easily forgotten. Especially when we consider how many people were affected by this terror. Lest we forget what happened, in this section,

we show images of the atrocities. The images are graphic, although the reality was many times worse, and those images are not appropriate to publish here (also out of respect for the victims).



Members of Zaka walk through the destruction caused by Hamas militants in Kibbutz Kfar Aza as they collect the dead bodies.



These abandoned and burned cars form an almost surreal image. It was in this area that the music festival took place and where hundreds of Israelis were murdered or kidnapped.



The area of the Nova music festival near the Israeli-Gaza border where hundreds of Israelis were murdered and kidnapped by Hamas terrorists.



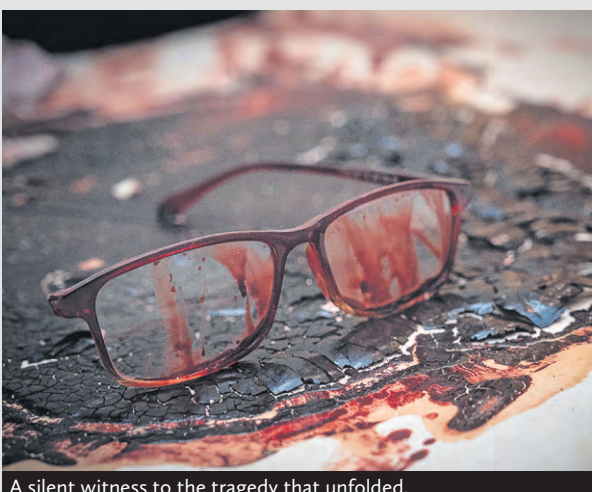
Wounded Israelis arrive at the Soroka Medical Center in Be'er Sheva in southern Israel.



Families of those kidnapped by Hamas during a press conference in Ramat Gan on 8 October.



Ido Nagar at a press conference in Tel Aviv on 12 October. Ido had not heard from his wife, Seline Ben David, since she took refuge in a shelter in an open field. Only on 17 October did her family learn she was dead. She leaves behind her husband and a baby daughter.



A silent witness to the tragedy that unfolded.



Abandoned army shoes on the side of the road near the Israeli-Gaza border.



Devastation in Ashkelon due to rockets fired by Hamas.



Fragment of a burnt bible found by a soldier in Be'eri. "The Lord shall grant strength to His people" Psalm 29.



Hundreds of Israelis donate blood in Jerusalem and other cities to help the wounded.



Pictures of Israelis abducted by Hamas terrorists in Gaza are screened on the walls of Jerusalem's Old City on 6 November.



230 empty beds in front of the City Hall in Jerusalem symbolise the hostages.



Israelis gather and light candles to remember the victims who were murdered by Hamas terrorists and Israelis abducted by Hamas terrorists in Gaza, at Dizengoff Square in Tel Aviv, a month after the 7 October massacre, 7 November.



The destruction caused by Hamas terrorists in Kibbutz Kissufim.



Family and friends attend the funeral of five members of the Kotz family, Livnat and Aviv and their three children, Rotem, Yonatan and Yiftach, on 17 October 2023. The Kotz family was killed by Hamas militants in their home in Kfar Aza, southern Israel.



The destruction caused by Hamas terrorists when they infiltrated Kibbutz Be'eri.



Member of the Zaka team in Kibbutz Kfar Aza. Zaka is Israel's primary rescue and recovery volunteer organisation.



Young Israeli children play inside a bomb shelter at a kindergarten in central Israel.

Mapping the Masscares

The attacks claimed the lives of more than 1,400 individuals, left more than 3,300 wounded and saw over 240 people taken as hostages. On <https://oct7map.com>, you can find an interactive map to visit the attack sites, learn the facts, and view the horrors.

Labels on the map include: Kfar Aza Massacre, Nahal Oz Massacre, Be'eri Massacre, Re'im Music Festival Massacre, Nir Oz Massacre, Ofakim Massacre, Jabalia, Gaza, Nuseirat, Deir el-Balah, Bani Suheila, Khan Yunis, Rafah, Yevul, Shlomit, Beersheba, Ramat, al-Azraq, al-Dhahiriya, Ashdod, Kiryat Malachi, Kiryat Gat, Ashkelon, Ma'arot, Bnei Kama, Ramat, al-Azraq, al-Dhahiriya, Beersheba, Yevul, Shlomit, Rafah, Khan Yunis, Bani Suheila, Deir el-Balah, Nuseirat, Jabalia, Gaza, Nahal Oz Massacre, Be'eri Massacre, Re'im Music Festival Massacre, Nir Oz Massacre, Ofakim Massacre.

| Photos: Flashgo & Jewish Agency for Israel



Israel is in a state of emergency—the scale of the brutal Hamas terror of 7 October is unlike anything the Jewish state has ever experienced. Jews were massacred, raped, kidnapped—because they are Jews. The perpetrators are beyond any form of humanity. Their actions are based on pure hatred fueled by lies. As Christians for Israel, we have been able to support many people in Israel directly in recent weeks through our emergency fund.

The need remains high. Please be aware that your financial contribution helps not only practically, but time and again, we hear that our help and comfort are experienced as an enormous encouragement.

Through our emergency fund, we help as many people in Israel as possible. Here are some examples:

- People in the south had to flee their homes in great haste and were transferred to safer places. They are often left with only bare necessities. We helped with evacuation, shelter, food and other basic necessities.
- The danger is still not over. Thousands of rockets have been fired at Israel in recent weeks. People

constantly have to seek shelter. It is particularly important that children receive extra attention and psychological counselling.

- Many Israelis are assisting to protect the inhabitants of the villages. We support them with basic protection necessities.

Let Israel feel that they are not alone at such a time as this!

- People are suffering because of the horrific events. Everyone in Israel knows someone who has been drafted into the army, knows or has lost someone because of Hamas terror, and lives in fear of what may come next. Children, teenagers and young adults, many of whom have never actually seen or experienced any suffering, are especially traumatised. As they spend time on the Internet and social media they are exposed to all the unfiltered horrific images. Survivors of the Holocaust see their worst nightmare come true again: 'never again' did happen. Traumas from their past

surface again. Therefore, we are also helping in this area. Thousands of Israelis across the country—organisations and residents—are working tooth and nail to help those who are severely traumatised.

- We help with protective film for the windows of retirement homes. These people cannot get to the shelters quickly or hear the alarm going off. -We also assist an institution that helps children with hearing disabilities get security arrangements in place. This is especially important for people with hearing problems.
- Unfortunately, first responders need to come into action a lot and need a lot of resources. We support replenishing supplies.
- We support ZAKA, the Israeli organisation that helps identify victims of disasters.
- Since many people have been drafted into the army, organisations are forced to close their doors due to a lack of staff. We help organisations that support the vulnerable. For example, women who are victims of domestic violence but cannot go to shelters or children with disabilities who cannot go to therapy.

Will You Help?

Israel has been brutally attacked. As Christians for Israel, we want to provide help where ever it is needed. While we've been able to support many urgent emergency requests, requests for help from all over Israel are still pouring in daily.

Together we can make a difference, bless Israel and alleviate the tremendous suffering.

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



Thousands of Israelis across the country— organisations and residents—are working tooth and nail to help the worst needs. In this photo, Tel Aviv residents help pack emergency packages for those affected in southern Israel. | Photo: Flash90

Besides financially supporting the people in Israel, encouragement of the Jewish people locally is also very important. C4I International Chairman Leon Meijer and his wife, Janine, were recently in Israel on

behalf of Christians for Israel. C4I New Zealand national leader Bryce Turner also flew to Israel to bring comfort to the people in Israel (read more on page 9 and 17).



Sderot, a town of 30,000 within 4 km of Gaza, was on the front line when Hamas gunmen rampaged through Israeli communities. The town has been evacuated ever since. Pictured here: The mayor of Sderot with Leon Meijer, Bryce Turner, Janine Meijer, and the mayor's daughter. | Photo: C4I

"Comfort, comfort My people"
Isaiah 40:1

The World Watches and Waits

■ Bryce Turner

Executive Director | Christians for Israel
New Zealand

It's somewhere up here on the left. Somewhere... Having been to Sderot a number of times, and specifically to the Police Station—a regular stop on our Study Tours, where you can look through the fence and see shelves full of rocket fragments from Gaza—I was sure the Police station was around here somewhere. Instead, there is an empty lot. But that is where the Police Station once stood. This Police station became the primary target of the Gazan terrorists on 7 October, and the massive fire-fight that followed saw the building destroyed to the point where the city decided to simply remove what was left of the rubble.

CCTV footage of a lone car meant to be the means to safety for a young family terrified by the ferocity and duration of the 6:30am rocket attack became footage of terror. Intercepted by pickup trucks loaded with heavily armed terrorists, the lone car stopped at the sound of another rocket. The father and his 4-year-old daughter were attacked whilst heading for a bomb shelter. Thinking both were dead, the terrorists re-boarded their vehicles and headed for the Police Station in Sderot.

We hold our breath, watching the screen in the operations command centre, waiting. Finally, there is movement. The little girl stands to her feet and looks around, stunned, shattered. At that moment the CCTV cameras catch her little face, every angle reflecting the ultimate fear of being all alone in the world. As our heart sinks, breaking just a little more, we see movement from the badly wounded father. The video continues. A police officer who had just finished his shift pulls up to the intersection and sees the badly wounded man and his daughter. Sending the little girl back to her mother and little sister in the family car, the kind policeman places the wounded man in his own car to take him to the safety of the Police Station. Totally unaware of the murderous intentions of the terrorists, the Police Officer arrives at the Police Station, which is now in the hands of the Gazans. The Police Officer, the wounded father, the mother and the youngest daughter are killed. And on the beautiful little girl? That look, the penetrating panic of being all alone, just became the rest of her life.

Normally a community of nearly 40,000, Sderot's mayor has become the largest hotel tenant in Israel. With

nearly 30,000 Sderot survivors now evacuated to hotels, the humanitarian task of looking after the well-being of every Sderot citizen just became massive. Schooling, kindergarten, jobs, and healthcare all have to be organised and coordinated. A significant job ordinarily, faced with not only the geographic displacement but also the reality of the attack itself, this task is now monumental.

And then there's the challenges that aren't so obvious. Everybody in this community has lost friends, family, neighbours. People can't sleep at night, and children scream in terror at the bang of every door closing. People have been shot, broken, violated. Many will never recover from this.

And the world says Israel should ceasefire.

The hotel is classy, and I have stayed at it whilst leading study tours in previous years. Ordinarily, it is a place of relaxation, good meals, and a quick walk down to experience the phenomena that is floating in the Dead Sea. The atmosphere this time, however, is subdued. In the foyer, a series of tables display a collection of odd items. Some unusual, but items that were obviously of significance to somebody. But who?

Then you see the display boards behind. Each board is covered in posters. Simple posters, black type, red titles, a colour photo. They all look the same at first, but they are different. Looking closer, each poster is a different face, a different name, age, and even nationality. Hamas wasn't fussy about who it murdered or who it captured, it seems.

Each poster is a person, a life, and the broken hearts of family, friends, a community, a country. But it's not just the grief of a lost loved one, for there are hundreds of those. It's the not knowing. The grinding agony of uncertainty. Are they still alive? Are they being looked after?

The faces of elderly men and women who have faithfully served their community for a lifetime, who are supposed to be enjoying the fruits of their labour as they love and live as only a grandparent can. The people who came from Gaza took them. Young men, fit, strong, their whole lives in front of them. They're gone, too.

Beautiful young teenage girls who should be enjoying their journey through youth, who should be trying out clothes and makeup. The butchers who cut off breasts and threw them at each other raped women until their pelvis shattered; those same 'resistance



The Sderot Police station in 2015, which was a regular stop during our C4I Study Tours | Photo: C4I Australia



Bryce Turner and Leon Meijer at the empty lot where the Sderot Police Station once was. | Photo: C4I

fighters' took these innocent young girls too. We can only wonder, in desperate hope, at what has happened to them.

Enraged at such absolute brutality, the military is doing what they have been forced to do. Every day, the faces of young soldiers, many freshly finished high school, are shared on national television as the memorial role plays; Each one counts another grieving family, another devastated mother. More brave young soldiers seeing things that no human being should have to see. More graves.

And the world watches and waits.

This afternoon, the good citizens of Gaza tried once again to kill me. For the second time this week, we departed from the Tel Aviv area only minutes before another deadly rocket barrage was fired into the civilian suburbs. The air-raid sirens have a sound like no other. Effective in communicating the urgency of a pending attack, the sound also worms into the deepest areas of the brain, causing a permanent response to any sound remotely similar—for the rest of one's life.

And still, the world watches. And passes judgment from the safety of keyboards or armchairs.

Some 500,000 people have been forced from their homes. Children live in hotel rooms—spacious and comfortable accommodation for the tourist to sleep in, but a prison cell for a growing young mind that cannot leave, cannot return to home, to normal.

And the world waits.

The news channels show yet more marches from around the world. Some now every more violent, public places being damaged or destroyed, flags being torn down, vile antisemitic icons and slogans being splashed with paint, and the ever-increasing frenzy of screaming hate. Thousands, thousands, more thousands. In countries all around the world. Countries in which, inevitably, most of these rabid masses were not born but were welcomed.

And the others? Quiet. Respectful.

Continued on page 10

Continued from page 9



Ian Worby (C4I Australia) at the Sderot police station holding fragments of a rocket fired by Hamas on Israel. | Photo: C4I Australia

Filled with the brainwashed idealism of a tyrannical terrorist regime, these people claim that the rapes, the burning alive, the babies in ovens, the absolute depravity... are some sort of 'resistance'. A 'push back' against some sort of oppressive nation who made the mistake of giving them land for peace. A mob high on bloodlust, publicly recording their determination to ensure the destruction of Israel and the genocide of the entire Jewish people around the world, the propaganda enlists ignorant and unquestioning support for the biggest fairytale in modern history.

Unquestioning? Because even the slightest attempt to research the truth makes supporting the Nakba myth completely untenable. An unviable nation whose only uniting factor is a hatred for Israel that has completely refused no less than five offers that

would have given them virtually everything they demand, its leaders would rather siphon off the billions of dollars of foreign aid to build luxury palaces than actually invest in the infrastructure of their people. Rather than build and develop, they leave their own people in poverty, preferring to build terror tunnels and rockets and buy munitions rather than the facilities their people need.

This is a system of hate, rotten to the very core, a generation of children raised on UNRWA textbooks—paid for unwittingly by the West—that do not teach hope for peace but hatred and incitement to the genocide of the Jews.

And the world watches.

Several days ago, we commemorated a battle from 1917, where dozens of young New Zealand soldiers lost their lives in the military campaign to rid the

Levant area of the tyrannical Ottoman Empire. Those living in the area, sometimes referred to as Palestine—Jews, Arabs, and others—had no rights, no vote, and lived a brutal life under an oppressive occupying force. There was no Arab state, certainly no capital in Jerusalem, and no such thing as a 'Palestinian'.

Despite the ridiculous cries of 'genocide' from those who would support Hamas et al., the Arab Muslim population has sky-rocketed since World War I; the supposed population of Gaza alone is more than 4-5 times what the entire population of 'Palestine' was at the time Israel was re-established.

Wake up people. It's time to call this out for the lies and hatred that it is.

Free Gaza from Hamas. Free the hostages. Now.

Then maybe we can talk about peace.

Three Days of Whispering

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

It's 30 degrees outside; we're sitting in a spa in Ein Bokek and looking out over the Dead Sea. If you didn't know any better, you'd think we're on vacation. But the poignant story of Lothan sitting next to me on the couch makes you immediately forget about the surroundings. Lothan is a survivor of Kibbutz Beeri (next to the Gaza Strip) and has been evacuated to one of the hotels in this spa town at the Dead Sea along with his wife, three children and about 1,000 residents of his community.

For twenty hours, Lothan and his family hid in the safe room of his house. Meanwhile, he heard shooting and Arabic shouts around the house. The residents kept each other informed via WhatsApp messages: "They are knocking on my door." "They are smashing my window." And so, unwittingly, Lothan witnessed the murder of his parents-in-law, who also lived in Beeri. His mother-in-law, who was holding the door of the safe room tightly shut, realised that her end was near and texted her children that she loved them. The Hamas terrorists put explosives on the door of her safe room, blew it up and entered. "HELP, HELP" are the last WhatsApp messages the family received from her. Two days later, Israeli forces found her and her husband at 300 meters from the kibbutz with a bullet through their heads. Apparently, Hamas had wanted to take them to Gaza, but they were too severely wounded to walk.

Lothan tells us that probably 300 to 400 terrorists had entered the kibbutz. For twenty hours, he and his family made as little noise as possible; they had no light. They didn't have enough food and too little to drink in the safe room. When the army was finally able to relieve them, there were still terrorists in the kibbutz and corpses everywhere. The soldiers who surrounded his family instructed him to hold his hands in front of

his children's eyes as they made their way to the road where they could board a bus. Halfway through, they were shot at, but fortunately, one of the soldiers eliminated the intruder.

Lothan has been in the hotel at the Dead Sea for six weeks now. When they came in, there was a large amount of candy waiting for the children in the lobby. His children only took healthy things and took them to their room. "Then we'll have food when the terrorists come here too," they told their mother. Their youngest son asks his father to tie the doorknob with a towel at night. He whispered for three days after 7 October.



Lothan, survivor of Kibbutz Beeri. | Photo: C4I

Miracle at Kibbutz Ibim

"A miracle, I have no other word for it", Racheli says. She works for The Jewish Agency and is responsible for sheltering 600 recently immigrated Ethiopian Jews in Ibim, a kibbutz near Gaza. In their murderous march through the villages surrounding Gaza, the Hamas terrorists walked past Ibim. The Ethiopian Jews in Ibim were completely defenceless; none of them were armed. However, they did spend hours in shelters and heard much war violence around them. The rockets fired in large numbers also hit their area.



On Monday, 9 October, while groups of terrorists were still roaming around, they were evacuated by buses. There was much fear and confusion. "We were running around pushing people into the buses. Full? Drive!" Just south of Haifa, in a large hotel, Racheli tells her story. The hotel houses 400 Ethiopian residents of Kibbutz Ibim, nearly 300 of whom are children. The many children roam the hotel's lobby and dining room. They do homework, play games and run around. Men and women are praying in the synagogue.

The team of the Jewish Agency working with the Ethiopian immigrants is also staying at the hotel. They come from the south themselves and have now been evacuated to this place. The sadness and horror can be heard in their stories and read from their eyes. Each of the four team members has lost family or friends. Their sons and daughters have been drafted into the military. Tears well up in Racheli's eyes as she tells she will be able to briefly see her son that evening, who is in Gaza as a soldier. They are doing their best to support the residents of Ibim as best they can and try to accommodate the kibbutz residents as much as possible as a community to maintain their bond.



A Shameful Resolution

■ Dr Matthijs de Blois

Senior Fellow | *thinc*.

On 27 October 2023, the UN General Assembly (GA), meeting in the framework of the ongoing (since 1997) 10th Emergency Special Session, adopted a Resolution on the war that started with the atrocious attack by Hamas and similar terrorist groups on 7 October 2023 on Israeli soil. The war has resulted in the death of around 1500 Israelis and the kidnapping of more than 200 innocent people. Resolution A/RES/ES-10/21 was adopted with 120 votes in favour, including Belgium, France, and Ireland, for example. 45 UN Member States abstained, including Canada, Australia, India and The Netherlands. Only 14 voted against it, including Austria, Papua New Guinea and the USA.

The Resolution was adopted as a response to what it calls “the 7 October 2023 attack”. The Resolution is shameful, primarily because of its silence on core issues. It nowhere identifies the perpetrator of the attacks: Hamas and other terrorist groups. It fails to name the entities responsible and does not describe them as terroristic. In its preamble it condemns “all acts of violence aimed at Palestinian and Israeli civilians”. Note the order: Palestinians are those first mentioned as victims then Israelis. This is historically false. That could be construed that Israel started the hostilities whereas, in reality, the war was initiated by the unprovoked pogrom on Israeli civilians committed by Hamas and its cronies. The casualties on the Palestinian side were the consequence of self-defence of Israel against the initial attack. Comparing the text of this Resolution with the Resolution (A/RES/ES-11/1) adopted by the GA on 2 March 2022 on the ‘Aggression against Ukraine’, it was made unequivocally clear that the Russian Federation was the aggressor.

The Resolution of 27 October asks for the “release of all civilians who are being illegally held captive” as if both sides have practised kidnapping of innocents. Only the Palestinian terrorist organisations kidnapped more than 200 civilians, not Israel. The hostages are almost all Israeli and Jewish babies, children, adults and elderly. Canada attempted to name the perpetrator of

the atrocities. It introduced an amendment to the Resolution: “Unequivocally rejects and condemns the terrorist attacks by Hamas that took place in Israel starting on 7 October 2023 and the taking of hostages, demands the safety, well-being and humane treatment of the hostages in compliance with international law, and calls for their immediate and unconditional release” (A/ES-10/L.26). 88 States were in favour of including this amendment, 55 were against it, and 23 abstained. The amendment failed by a few votes to be adopted by the required two-thirds majority. The omission of reference to the perpetrator of the massacre in Israel did not prevent many supporters of the amendment from voting in favour of the original proposal. As a result, the Resolution was adopted without the amendment.

The Resolution omits the recognition of Israel’s right to self-defence. Article 51 of the UN Charter guarantees “the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a member of the United Nations”. The right to self-defence justifies the military response by Israel to the massive terrorist attack by Hamas *cum suis*. There is no mention in the Resolution of Israel having the right to act in self defence. That is in sharp contrast with the Resolutions adopted by the UN Security Council after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 in the US in September 2001.

Resolutions 1368 (2001) and 1373 (2001) recognise without reservation the right of self-defence by the US, which justified its military actions against the Al-Qaeda terrorist network in Afghanistan. A large majority of the Members of the UN seem to deny that the Jewish State has the right to defend itself.

The Resolution also fails to address and condemn the practice of Hamas using civilians as human shields. Palestinian terrorist movements operating in Gaza



The UN General Assembly Adopts Resolution A/RES/ES-10/21. | Photo: UN Photo/Evan Schneider

regularly operate using their military installations for civilian locations. The Resolution ignores the fact that this practice is a major cause of the number of civilian fatalities in the Gaza Strip.

It is a shame that the Resolution has been adopted with the support of so many States in the world, not only brutal dictatorships but also Western democracies. They apparently see no problem in joining forces with the Islamic Republic of Iran, Syria, the Russian Federation and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. It is revealing that Hamas expressed support for the Resolution and asked for its immediate implementation, the very party that holds hostage more than 200 men, women and children continues to target civilians in Israel with their missiles. To conclude, Resolution A/RES/ES-10/21 is a shame. It illustrates that the UN is, notwithstanding the pogrom of 7 October 2023, back to normal: Israel bashing. It has lost all credibility as an institution to promote peace and justice in the world.

Dr Matthijs de Blois is Emeritus Assistant Professor at Utrecht University’s Institute of Legal Theory of the Law Faculty, where his academic focus was the philosophical and historical aspects of the law, specifically the relationship between law and religion. He is currently Senior Fellow at the Hague Initiative for International Cooperation (thinc.).

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Experiencing God's Blessing—Part 4

■ Keith Buxton

Former National Director | Bridges for Peace Australia

This is part four in a series of five articles sharing some thoughts from the *Torah* portion, or *parsha*, named *Ekev*—*Deuteronomy* 7:12–11:25.

We have been learning that it was true for the children of Israel—and true for every believer—that “He shall receive blessing from the Lord” who (1) holds fast to the Word of God, (2) displays true humility, and (3) demonstrates obedience to our Lord.

Our *Torah* passage develops these three important conditions for experiencing the amazing blessing of our God. We focus now on the clarion call to the Israelites to be a people who obey their God.

In the very first verse (*Deuteronomy* 7:12) we read: “Then it shall come to pass, because you listen to these judgements, and keep and do them, that the Lord your God will keep with you the covenant and the mercy which He swore to your fathers.”

Moses, the mouthpiece of God, tells His people that their possession of the land will have nothing to do with anything virtuous about them (another reminder about humility), but rather is due to the wickedness of the people who are to be dispossessed and to God's faithfulness to His covenant promises:

Deuteronomy 9:4–6: “Do not think in your heart, after the Lord your God has cast them out before you, saying, ‘Because of my righteousness the Lord has brought me in to possess this land’; but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is driving them out from before you.

“It is not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart that you go in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord your God drives them out from before you, and that He may fulfill the word which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Therefore understand that the Lord your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stiff-necked people.”

Moses then goes on to catalogue the many instances of the rebellious nature of this ‘stiff-necked people’ during their forty years in the wilderness. Time and again Israel failed the obedience test.

Deuteronomy 9:7 puts it starkly: “Remember! Do not forget how you provoked the Lord your God to wrath



| Photo: Lightstock

in the wilderness. From the day that you departed from the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the Lord.”

Verse 24 is perhaps even starker: “You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you.” These verses only serve to underline the mercy and grace of their God and our God.

After Israel's sin of idolatry in fashioning and worshipping the golden calf, we read in *Deuteronomy* 10 of Moses making two new tablets of stone inscribed by God with the Ten Commandments. As Rabbi Ken Spiro explains, “Moses comes back down with the second set of tablets, and this is a clear sign that God has forgiven the Jewish people. What's the day Moses comes back down? *Yom Kippur*.”

“From *Yom Kippur* we get the spiritual power of *teshuva*—of repentance, of returning to closeness with God and repairing relationships with our fellow human beings.”

Some people draw a thick black line between the two testaments in our Bible, implying that the God of the former is different entirely to the God of the Christian Scriptures.

Nothing could be further from the truth! At an individual personal level, recall for a moment the account of Joseph forgiving his brothers for selling him into slavery. That's a wonderful story that speaks

powerfully to people today about forgiving those who wrong us.

Now listen to this statement of God's forgiveness in *Deuteronomy* 10:10–11: “As at the first time, I [Moses] stayed in the mountain forty days and forty nights; the Lord also heard me at that time, and the Lord chose not to destroy you. Then the Lord said to me, ‘Arise, begin your journey before the people, that they may go in and possess the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.’”

“You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you.”

What an amazing God we serve! As philosopher Simon May puts it in his book, *Love: A History*: “The widespread belief that the Hebrew Bible is all about vengeance and ‘an eye for an eye,’ while the Gospels supposedly invent love as an unconditional and universal value, must therefore count as one of the most extraordinary misunderstandings in all of Western history.”

The contrast often drawn between Christianity as a religion of love and forgiveness and Judaism as a religion of law and vengeance simply doesn't hold up. Our loving and all-powerful God never changes!

Pope Francis Meets Representatives of Families of Israeli Hostages

At the meeting on 22 November in the Vatican, the families asked him to issue a clear call for the release of all the abductees held by Hamas and not to leave anyone behind.

Yuval Danzig, whose 75-year-old father Alex was abducted in Gaza, said, “At the end of my words, the Pope stated that he had heard about my father.” His father, Alex, was one of the pioneers of the youth delegations to Poland.

“Terror is worse than war,” the Pope told the delegation, and at the end, he warmly shook the hands of all the participants of the meeting and emphasised

that he would do everything in his power to help.

Israel's ambassador to the Vatican, Rafi Schutz, noted that the meeting took place as part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs effort to keep the issue at the centre of the world agenda, as part of the various steps taken on behalf of the ministry to bring about the speedy release of all the abductees.

Schutz emphasised that the meeting with the Pope is unique in two aspects. “Being the leader of approximately 1.3 billion believers worldwide gives his statements about the need to release the abductees a significant international resonance,” he said was the first.

“In addition,” he said, “the connections that the Pope has developed over the course of his ten years in office with religious leaders in the Muslim world may help in this humanitarian effort on a religious and not necessarily a political basis.”

Recently, the delegation met with Italy's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Antonio Taiani and with the Minister of Culture Santiapiano, who expressed support and solidarity with the families and called for the immediate release of all the abductees in Gaza.

The Comfort of the Resurrection

■ Ps Enoch Lavender
Director | Olive Tree Ministries

...on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. (Matt. 16:18)

Am I the only one confused by this saying of Jesus? Hades is commonly understood to refer to Hell, but why would its gates be fighting against the Church? Does it mean that the Church is seeking to break into Hell itself? If so, why?

The teaching ministry *First Fruits of Zion* explains that this text is, in fact, a reference to the Saints’ future victory over death. They helpfully point out that the word ‘Hades’ is a translation of the Hebrew term ‘Sheol’, which refers to the afterlife. The gates of Sheol are defensive structures intended to prevent the dead from passing back to life. However, Jesus promises that these gates will not be able to hold back His Church on the great Day of the Resurrection. On that day, the gates of Hades will fling wide open as the Saints return to life. In that great day of rejoicing and jubilation, the believers will rise anew in recreated bodies, physically embracing long-lost loved ones with tearful shouts of joy.

The Hope of the First-Century Believers

The scene was one of heartbreak and sadness. Mary and Martha were surrounded by friends and relatives as they grieved the recent loss of their beloved brother Lazarus. They had requested Jesus to come urgently, but now it was too late.

If a modern-day pastor had been in Jesus’ shoes, you could expect him or her to issue words of comfort centred around Heaven and eternity, assuring Martha in the midst of her grief. The conversation could have looked something like this:

The pastor said to her, “You will see your brother again in eternity.” Martha said to the pastor, “I know that I will see him in Heaven.” The pastor said to her, “Jesus is the way to Heaven....”

However, Jesus’ conversation with Martha was radically different in focus:

Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. (John 11:23-25, *emphasis added*)

This intimate conversation between Jesus and Martha reveals much about the first-century Jewish understanding of the afterlife, an understanding which Jesus did not contradict. When facing the loss of her brother, Martha’s source of comfort and hope was not on seeing him in Heaven, but rather of one day meeting him again physically here on Earth in “The

Resurrection at the Last Day”.

This is not to say that there is no afterlife. The Bible records Jesus saying to the dying criminal hanging beside Him on the cross, “Today you will be with me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43). However, the afterlife was seen as only a temporary place for the dead while awaiting the resurrection.

Awaking from Sleep

A helpful metaphor for understanding the difference between the afterlife and the resurrection is found in the Biblical concept of sleep and death. Being dead is often referred to as being ‘asleep’ in the Bible (see, for example, 1 Kings 2:10, 11:43).

We even see this in the story of Martha’s brother Lazarus: [Jesus] said to them, “Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up.” (John 11:11)

Like the afterlife, sleep is a state of rest where one is out of reach of the physical surroundings of Earth. The afterlife, like sleep, is only temporary until the time when one wakes up. Just as the clanging sound of an alarm clock wakes us up, so one day, the piercing sound of the trumpet will wake us up from the sleep of death.

In the words of Daniel the prophet: And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt. (Dan. 12:2)

While sleep is a part of life, our real focus is on what happens while we are awake. In the same way, first-century Jews such as Martha were not primarily focused on the sleep of the afterlife but rather on the awakening to come at the great Resurrection. This was their source of comfort; this was their future hope. A few years ago, my family and I discovered this truth for ourselves in a deeply personal way.

Finding Comfort in the Resurrection

... the Lord has anointed Meto proclaim liberty to the captives [of death],To comfort all who mourn, ... To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning. (Is. 61:1-3, *author’s comment inserted*)

A year and a half had passed since the arrival of our twins, and my wife was pregnant again. As we began to pray about this new addition to our family, we felt that the Lord gave us a name for her, calling her Joy. It was a beautiful name, and we were looking forward to meeting her, having received prophetic words about this little baby.

Very early in the pregnancy, my wife had a small bleed. The doctors reassured us that it was nothing to worry about, but when they later checked her out properly, they could no longer find Joy’s heartbeat. We asked



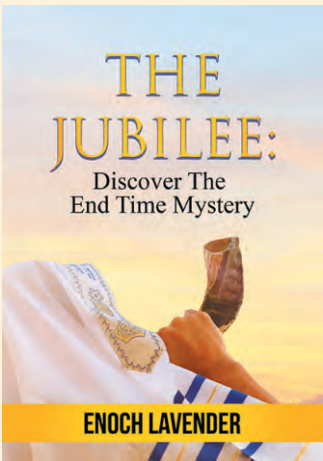
them to check and triple-check, but the result remained the same—she was gone. We were devastated and stunned by what had happened. The hardest part for me personally was the sense that God had given us clear prophetic words about this little one, and now those words were quite literally falling to the ground unfulfilled. It was confusing, discouraging and disheartening.

In the days leading up to the miscarriage, I had just begun to study the topic of the Resurrection. As I reflected on what had happened, gradually, the light and comfort found in the Resurrection began to wipe away my tears.

I began to ponder the many unfulfilled prophecies given to Israel and realised that while these promises seem impossible to fulfil right now, God is faithful to His Word and will fulfil them in the Messianic Age. I came to understand that these are not the only promises that will await fulfilment in the Messianic Age. God’s promises to us concerning our little baby Joy will also come to pass in that great day of restoration. There is a day coming when my wife and I will literally and physically encounter our baby Joy, and Oh, what Joy it will be! Then, the prophetic meaning of her name will be fulfilled as we embrace her with tears of joy.

There is coming a great Jubilee in which God will comfort our mourning and replace our tears with shouts of joy. My prayer is that our personal story of loss and of the hope we found in the Resurrection will also minister comfort to you in any area of grief that you may be going through.

For more about the comfort and hope found in the Resurrection and the Jubilee, see my new book *‘The Jubilee: Discover the End Time Mystery’*.



The Jubilee: Discover the End Time Mystery Book

BY PASTOR ENOCH LAVENDER

In this ground breaking book, join Pastor Enoch Lavender as he uncovers key elements of the End Times from a fresh Messianic Perspective. The message of the Jubilee offers an exciting and uplifting perspective on the End Times through its original Jewish context. The Apostle Peter speaks of the Jubilee as “the restoration of all things... spoken by mouth of all His holy prophets” (Acts 3:21).

In this book we are going to discover that the Jubilee offers a message of hope in the midst of darkness, of new life out of death, of entering one’s God-given inheritance, of the wicked being deposed from power and the meek entering the Kingdom.

Topics covered include:

- A fresh understanding of the word ‘Gospel’
- Jesus’ miracles as a foretaste of the greater to come

- The Jubilee Trumpet and its links to Jesus’ return
- The tremendous hope of the resurrection
- The final ingathering of God’s people
- The kingdom to come
- The restoration of all things

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From 'War Zone Ukraine' to 'War Zone Israel'

■ Anemone Rüger

Christians for Israel

Christians for Israel has been supporting young families with their integration into Israel through 'First Home in the Homeland' for many years. The overwhelming majority of these families are coming from the former Soviet Union. Many of them just fled war-torn Ukraine last year. How are they doing now?

Be'eri - a piece of paradise, no more than five kilometres from the Gaza Strip. The orange blossoms of the flame trees, green lawns, well-kept sidewalks, inviting little houses for families who don't want to go anywhere else. That's how we know this kibbutz in the north of the Negev, and that's how it was described to us by Valya and Maya when we visited there last summer with a small C4I team. A few months earlier, they had repatriated to Israel with their young son Mark from war-torn Ukraine with the help of C4I and had been accepted into the 'First Home in the Homeland' intensive integration programme. Be'eri and the kibbutz community literally became their first home in their historic homeland, Israel, and the little family was happy when their request for an extension of another six months was approved.

The Be'eri we knew no longer exists. The kibbutz is devastated; body parts were still found over a week after the massacre Hamas carried out there on 7 October. A temporary military base has been established there. Otherwise, Be'eri resembles a ghost town.

I hardly dare ask Valeria about 'our' Ukrainian families of new immigrants. Valeria—herself a repatriate from Russia who came just a year and a half ago—oversees the programme and has been working around the clock to help the families since that inconceivable *Shabbat*. She has good news.

"Valya and Maya just moved a few towns over to Sderot two months ago," Valeria says. "They were lucky. But Sderot was then also attacked. They are staying with friends for now."

We hear many such near-miss stories now, also from Valeria's colleague, who lives in a kibbutz south of the Gaza Strip and actually intended to take her family on a trip to the beautiful sandy beach near Zikim on that fateful *Shabbat*. It would have been a death trap. Instead, she spent agonising hours in the dark without electricity in the shelter. She and her family were rescued—severely traumatised. But many of her friends and many of her children's classmates are no longer alive.

Emergency Help for Newcomer Families

"We have more than 150 families in the programme, including those who have extended another six months," Valeria tells us. "They are all safe. Twenty of them had to be evacuated—most from the south, from Or HaNer and Nir Am, but also some who live on the border with Lebanon."

The team—overseen by the Jewish Agency and financially supported by C4I—is doing everything humanly possible to provide for the families. "The most important thing for the families right now is good information," Valeria says. "We offer different Zoom meetings just to talk to the families. There is psychological help; there are many activities to attend to the needs of the children. Language classes are continuing; people want to keep learning Hebrew. But practical support is also needed—the evacuated



Kibbutz Be'eri last summer. | Photo: Christians for Israel



The destruction caused by Hamas Militants in Kibbutz Be'eri, near the Israeli-Gaza border, in southern Israel, 14 October 2023. | Photo: Flash90

families can't work for the time being and rely on help for everything."

And help is coming. Neighbours are moving closer together; even new immigrants who are still in the process of getting settled in Israel are looking for ways to support their fellow countrymen.

Everyone is Pulling Together

"One of our local coordinators decided to stay in Or HaNer, very close to the Gaza Strip, to help guard the kibbutz and take care of the IDF soldiers there. He called me to ask if I needed help!" Valeria shares. "Another co-worker, whose husband was drafted, is baking cakes for the soldiers. Everyone pitches in somehow, including our *olim* (new immigrants)."

Many families only recently arrived from war-torn Ukraine with high hopes for a happy new life. How are they coping with the events?

"So far, no one has told us that they regret having moved here," says Valeria. "We get a lot of messages from families thanking us for taking such good care of them here."

"We are safe—thanks to the efforts of Slava and the people from the kibbutz. We are so glad that we were assigned to this kibbutz, despite all the horror," writes one family. And another: "We can't help but be amazed at how compassionate the people around us are. I have not regretted for a second that I became an Israeli. We

are proud to be part of this great nation!"

Everyone is trying to be brave, stick together and do something to help others.

"Everyone is scared, of course," Valeria says. "No one knows what will be tomorrow, even what will be in an hour. What helps us through this is having friends around us now. We need your support like the air we breathe. Your prayers are the ground beneath our feet."



Letter to an Israeli soldier by 7-year old Kira who recently came to Israel with her parents: "Thank you for protecting us!" | Photo: C4I

Closed Curtains

■ Yoel Schukkmann

A few months ago—at the beginning of the Jewish month of Eloel—I was invited to speak for *Isreality*, the youth movement of Christians for Israel. I talked, among other things, about a custom we have of saying an extra Psalm every day after our daily prayers. In this Psalm we say: “Though war break out against me, even then will I be confident” (*Psalm 27:3*). “That doesn’t sound logical,” I told the youngsters. Rabbi Meir Shapiro (1887-1933) explained that if my path in life were worth nothing, then neither would I encounter constant resistance from my enemy, who is rising up against me in war.

The fact that a ‘war’ comes my way at every turn is a sign that my actions, my life’s purpose and ambitions are very valuable. So valuable that a total war breaks out against me to keep me from realising my dreams. We also find ourselves in a war today, a war that broke out against us. Not because we are worth nothing but because we are valuable. Because we stand for what is good and true.

Closed Curtains

As a five-year-old child, Rabbi Yitzchak Aryeh Sekel (1768-1847), better known as

the Baal Shem of Michelstadt, was already known as a child prodigy because of his wisdom. The fame of this prodigy eventually reached even the king (or count) of Michelstadt, who now wanted to see for himself whether the rumours were really true. He summoned the child to his castle on a certain day and time. The king ordered that everyone should hide when this prodigy would come. After all, the castle had many rooms, and with no one to show the way, he wanted to see if the child would find his way to him.

When the day dawned, the king looked out his window and saw young Yitzchak Aryeh walking into the courtyard. A short time later, the king was surprised by knocks on his door. The king was dumbfounded. “How did you know I was here?” he asked the child. “Before I went inside, I took some time to look at the castle from the outside,” he told the king. “I saw that the curtains of all rooms were open to let the sunlight in. Only one room had closed curtains, and I understood that had to be the room where the king was watching me from behind the curtains.”

Redemption and Goodness

Years later, Rabbi Sekel repeated and explained the story. “When a person is



| Photo: Canva Pro

going through difficult times, and he feels that the curtains of heaven are closed, it’s just a sign that God is present, watching him from behind the curtain, from His hiding place.”

“Hardship is often followed by redemption and goodness.”

Just as dawn comes after night, hardship is often followed by redemption and goodness. *Jeremiah 30:7* says: “It will be a time of trouble for Jacob, but he will be

saved out of it.” And as Rabbi Yona ben Abraham (1200-1263) writes: “The darkness is the origin of the light that will come.” May we all see this light soon in our days.

Yoel Schukkmann grew up in the Netherlands as a Hasidic Jew. In his teens, he made Aliyah to study in a yeshiva. Yoel now lives in Jerusalem with his wife and two children. He is a speaker, teaches yeshiva boys and learns in a Kollel, a learning institute for married men.

Hamas’ Haman/Amalek Demonic Spirit

■ David Nekrutman

Imagine the following 7 October scenario: Gazans break through the security fence, and tens of thousands just stand at the border demanding peace with Israel. No missiles! No artillery! No one is paragliding into Israel! That move alone would have been more monumental than Egyptian President Anwar Sadat’s visit to Israel 46 years ago. Unfortunately, our nation is still grappling with the loss of over 1,200 murdered, thousands physically wounded, and 239 still held hostage by Hamas.

For the first week of Swords of Iron, most of the world seemed to be on our side. World leaders and even reporters wept in front of the camera who witnessed the barbaric nature of Hamas’ killing spree of Jews and non-Jews. By the beginning of the second week, an explosion of antisemitism had grabbed hold of the world. Pro-Hamas protests declaring “Free Palestine: From the River to the Sea” has been echoed even in countries heavily populated with Jews. In 2013, Mehdi Hasan already

exposed the antisemitism of Muslims living in Britain. It seems that the pandemic of antisemitism has swept into other countries and has infected our college campuses. We are living in a season where it’s perfectly legitimate in Western democracies to publicly support a terrorist organisation and declare “kill the Jews.” It just took three weeks to witness the full scale of a Haman spirit.

In the court of public opinion as well as mainstream and social media, Hamas has successfully turned many against us by tactically embracing an Amalek spirit in the use of Gazans as human shields, storing their weapons in hospitals and mosques, and preventing civilians from moving to safer places in the area. Hamas was counting on Gazan civilian deaths so people would ponder the moral equivalency of Israel’s actions. More people are talking about “What is a proportional response?” than any other period in history. However, a remnant within the Christian world understands that Israel is a sovereign and democratic state fighting Hamas and other brutal Iran-sponsored non-

state players on behalf of the civilised world. Furthermore, they recognise there is no moral equivalence between Israel and Hamas.

Unfortunately, our nation is still grappling with the loss of over 1,200 murdered, thousands physically wounded, and 239 still held hostage by Hamas.

Instead of creating a Dubai on the Mediterranean, Hamas oppressed their people. They used billions of international aid to buy an arsenal and dig an elaborate tunnel network under Gaza to actualise Article 15 of their Charter, “In the face of the Jews’ usurpation of Palestine, it is compulsory that the banner of Jihad be raised.” On 7 October, Hamas deliberately went to individual homes to kill families and slaughter many at a peace festival. Yet, Hamas’ demonic spirit has convinced many this was justified in the name of freeing Palestine.

In the wake of the greatest mass slaughter of Jews since the Holocaust,

the most brazen example of terrorism on the international stage since 9/11, some pastors have chosen to be silent on this issue from their pulpit. They have

been caught up in the moral equivalency argument and forgotten about the biblical point of remembering what God said about Amalek in *Deuteronomy 25:17-19*. While Hamas does not represent the average Gazan, this terrorist organisation revels in war crimes and proudly broadcasts its savagery for all the world to see. It is my hope that these pastors see the light that ‘Free Palestine’ should be interpreted as free from Hamas.

David Nekrutman is an Orthodox Jewish theologian with over two decades experience in the calling of Jewish-Christian relations. He currently serves as the Executive Director of The Isaiah Projects and is the Jewish Adviser to The Chosen.

Christians for Israel on TV in Norway

■ Rev Cornelis Kant

Executive Director | Christians for Israel International

"We need to have this in Oslo too!" Pastor Jan-Aage Torp told me after our conference in Bergen, Norway, last June. And so he set to work on a 3-day conference for pastors of churches in Oslo in October. Over 60 pastors promptly registered. Meanwhile, the war around Gaza broke out shortly before, and some of them stayed home out of fear of incidents. The organiser was keen for the lectures to be broadcast on TV to reach as many people as possible. However, there appeared to be a considerable price tag for the arrival of a camera crew. He decided to pray for this. The evening

before the conference, a sponsor spontaneously phoned. During the week of 13 November, all lectures were broadcast on *Visjon Norge TV* and on the internet via kristenkoalisjon.world.

Andrew Tucker of *thinc.* spoke about international law, the war in Gaza, the impossibility of the EU's two-state solution and the EU's long-standing anti-Israel stance. I spoke about the significance of Israel in God's plan of salvation in the Old and New Testaments, reading many biblical passages, and explained the origin and development of replacement theology.

A Norwegian Member of Parliament, Himanshu Gulati, himself a Hindu, addressed us at the

conference. He told us that his nation of origin, India, along with many Hindus worldwide, strongly stand with Israel. He informed us he is part of an international pro-Israel organisation of politicians. How shocking that many churches and Christians in Norway are very critical of Israel, while a Hindu supports Israel.

The conference concluded with a panel discussion in which a Norwegian lawyer and a former colonel from the Norwegian army also participated. We look back with gratitude on a valuable conference and pray that the broadcasts may reach many people.



Left photo: Conference attendees in Bergen, Norway. Right photo: Left to right: Andrew Tucker; Cornelis Kant; Eigil Jespersen, former colonel in the Norwegian Army and leader of pro-Israel group in the Labor movement in Norway; Hagnar Hatlem, international law lawyer; Pastor K the Annbj rg Kristoffersen from Kristiansand; Jan-Aage Torp and his wife Aina, organizer of the conference and President of the European Apostolic Leaders.

Suriname Prays for Israel

■ Rev Cornelis Kant

Executive Director | Christians for Israel International

"Now I understand why we should pray for Israel". This is how a participant responded via WhatsApp the day after our Israel conferences in Paramaribo, a former colony of The Netherlands. The importance of prayer for Israel apparently touched him deeply since he woke up on Saturday morning, 7 October, after our conferences and saw the news about Hamas' horrible terrorist attacks on Israel. Over 500 people attended the Israel conferences at Paramaribo's biggest theatre. A dance group opened the conference with Israeli songs, impressively setting the mood. Pastor Said Flores from Cura ao talked about the history of the people of Israel. Suriname's ambassador to Israel, Stevanus Noordzee, explained that Israel was the first country in the Middle East to establish diplomatic relations with Suriname after it recognised its independence in 1975. Since then, Israel has been an important partner for Suriname in healthcare, agriculture and technology. Rev Kenneth Kross, chairman of the Israel Committee Suriname, spoke about the importance of praying for Israel and taking a stand for Israel in international politics. He also mentioned that Suriname was a safe haven for many European Jews during WWII. The vice-president of Suriname, Ronny Brunswijk, attended a

part of the conference and shared with the attendees that Suriname cooperates with Israel on the further development of Suriname in many areas. During my session, I explained the unique bond between Jerusalem and the Jewish people from the Bible and that Jerusalem can never be divided.

The third conference took place in Nieuw Nickerie, in the west of the country, on the day Hamas attacked Israel. "It is so good to be reawakened about Israel with these Bible studies and speeches," one pastor said. Another participant told me: "I was born in Suriname, but now I know where my real roots are." Extensive prayers were offered for Israel's protection. The conferences were unique for Suriname, especially since the war broke out in Israel in these very days.

The conferences in Paramaribo were live broadcasted on TV in Suriname. After the conferences, we were invited for a personal meeting by President Santokhi of Suriname. Together, we prayed for Israel. We were all particularly touched by the warmth of the people in Suriname and their love for Israel.



Rev Cornelis Kant together with Rev Kenneth Kross hands a menorah to the President of Suriname. | Photos: C4I



Worldwide Rallies for Israel

Australia	 	Austria	 	Belgium	 
Cote D'Ivoire		Germany	 	Italy	 
Netherlands	 	New Zealand	 	Surinam	
Switzerland		Ukraine	 	Vietnam	 

Victims of War

Peace Activist
Murdered

Canadian-Israeli Vivian Silver (74) worked for years as a peace activist and leader of Women Waging Peace to bring peace to the Gaza region. She also brought residents of Gaza who needed medical treatment to Israeli hospitals. It was initially believed that Vivian was kidnapped to Gaza during the 7 October massacre. Recently, her body was found; she had been murdered.

Murder of the
Innocents

Yosef Winner, a Holocaust survivor, writes: "My name is Yosef Winner, and I am 97 years old. I survived the flames of the Nazi beasts. My entire family perished in the terrible inferno. I was cut off from my deep roots. Out of exhaustion, despair, and drowning, I clung to the ground and planted roots in Zion. I married Aviva, and we raised two wonderful children—Ofer and Nurit. From Ofer and Michal, I have four grandchildren in Kfar Aza. From Nurit and Miki, I have six grandchildren in Kfar Aza, too. I had a large and well-planted family tree in the homeland. A tree that bears fruits. But suddenly, the events of 7 October emerged from among the fences of evil. The gruesome sights of fire and dust, the horrible killing and murder of innocents, came to me again. My dearest grandson Yahav was murdered while protecting his wife, Shai-Li, and his one-month-old daughter, Sheya. And my dearest granddaughter, Hadar, and her husband, Itay, were murdered while protecting their ten-month-old twins, Roy and Guy. Again, I am exhausted, in despair, drowning."

The Power of Our Prayer

■ Rev Henk Poot

Christians for Israel International

When we hear and see so many atrocities against the Jewish people, we wonder what we can do. One thing we should certainly do is pray.

Before I elaborate on the power of prayer with a few examples from the Bible, first note: friends in Israel ask us to pray. How precious is that in all the misery? Have we drawn so close together through this crisis? What joy there must be in heaven when we pray together in unity.

Moses: My first example is Moses. After the children of Israel are delivered from Egypt, Amalek attacks. They attack from the rear. We see the same thing now. A columnist wrote in the first days after the Hamas invasion: 'women and children first' has a changed meaning from now on.

Of course, the people of Israel fight back, but there are some who became too old for battle. Moses, for example. He stands on a hilltop to see the unfolding of the war. But he doesn't just stand and watch; Moses raises his hands to God. He continues to do so. Later, Aaron and Hur will support his tired arms, for he notices that his prayers give strength to Israel. Stronger even than that: through prayer, the enemy is defeated. These days, I often think: What is Jesus doing? What is the Lion of Judah doing? Who loves the Jews more than He does? I know He is pleading at the right hand of God with deep sighs until He is allowed to go to earth, to Jerusalem, in all His glory and power.

Jehoshaphat: Another example is King Jehoshaphat (2 *Corinthians* 20). When Judah is overrun by enemies, he stands before his people, raises his hands and says to God, We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on You. Our enemies want to drive us out of our possessions, but will You not judge them? The Lord answers that it is His battle! He will give the victory. We read in the following verses that the children of Israel sing to the Lord and praise Him during the battle. So prayer is coming before the Lord with your own powerlessness, and prayer is praising the Lord for His great deeds. What He did, He will do also now! Prayer means putting the suffering and evil that happens to Israel into God's hands and praising Him as the God of Israel who does marvellous deeds!

Paul: Our last example is Paul. Paul's mission is to proclaim the coming of God's kingdom in the centre of the superpower



Rome. In *Ephesians*, he writes that we do not fight the battle against men but against spiritual forces in the heavenly realms. He tells them to put on spiritual armour. One of the important weapons from this armour is the Word of God. When it comes to Israel, we should not close the Bible— like so many in churches still do. No, as Christians, we should open the Bible. And, as Paul says, we must pray persistently in that battle.

How Can We Support Israel?

By showing that we love the Jewish people, by giving our offerings now that they need our support, and by seeking the face of the God of Israel: Lord, arise. May Your enemies be scattered, and may those who hate You flee from Your presence.

The Bible Speaks

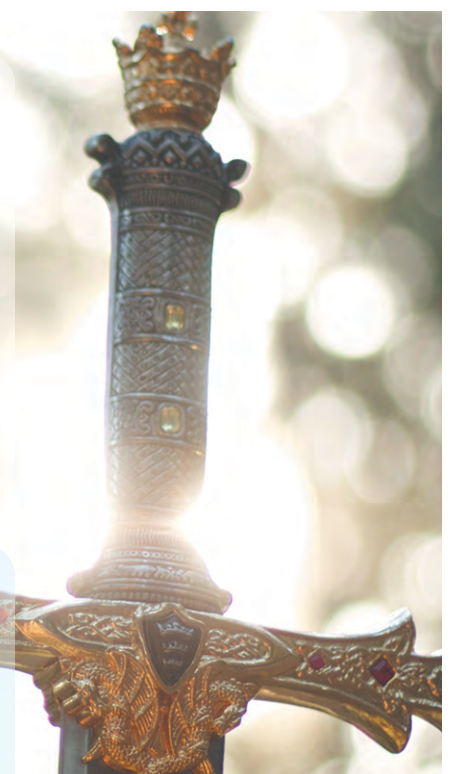
The Coming of the Messiah

'I saw heaven standing open, and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice, he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron sceptre." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.'

Revelation 19:11-16

This is how the Messiah will come! Paul says in *Romans 1* that God endures, but He does not forget. And here we see how the accumulated wrath of the Lord over the evil done to His children comes to an eruption. Not without reason did the priest Zechariah sing at the birth of Jesus that Israel will now finally be delivered from the hand of all who hate them. And we pray:

"Maranatha, Lord Jesus, come!"



Believing Without Israel

The Church as the New and 'Spiritual Israel'—Part 8

■ Rev Cornelis Kant

Executive Director | Christians for Israel International

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

Let us continue by seeing how certain biblical passages have been used to defend enlargement or fulfilment theology.

When people unfortunately do not consider Israel and the Jewish people anymore as significant for the Christian faith, they consider the church, the congregation of Christ, as the new 'spiritual Israel'. This is, in fact, another kind of replacement. As a result, all the promises to Israel in the Old and New Testaments are applied to the church in a spiritual sense. This is remarkable because, for the many hundreds of times the name Israel appears in the Bible, it always refers to the people or land of Israel and never to the church. Those who consider the church as the new 'Israel of God' often like to refer to *Galatians 6:16*: "And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God." This passage refers to believers who have become a new creation in Christ Jesus. They were then said to be the new 'Israel of God'.

However, if you read Paul carefully, you will notice that he actually distinguishes between two groups by using the insert 'and': "peace and mercy be upon them and upon the Israel of God". 'Them' and



| Photo: Lightstock

'Israel of God' are therefore not the same but distinct. Yet the 'Israel of God' has been persistently seen by many theologians as a further definition of the earlier 'them'. The English-language Bible translation of the New International Version (NIV) has even omitted the little word 'and', thereby encouraging this misinterpretation. While the original Greek text really does contain the word 'kai' (and).

Supporters of enlargement or fulfilment theology also often refer to *1 Peter 2:9*: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession." Peter is addressing believers in Jesus Christ here. We can also read this same passage in *Exodus 19:5*, where the Lord God Himself addresses the people of Israel. It is argued that what first pertained to the people of Israel is now related to the

church of Christ. The church of Christ would have taken the position of Israel. This is a peculiar conclusion because we cannot read that in either text. If both Israel and the Christian congregation are addressed as a royal priesthood, a holy nation, this does not mean that one replaces the other. Israel and the Christian congregation both coexist and are both named with these titles. It should be noted that there are also theologians who believe that Peter's first letter was written to Messianic Jews in Rome. After all, the letter begins with the words: "To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (*1 Peter 1:1*). Regardless of how we see this, never can the conclusion be that the church has replaced Israel.

Reflection

By Rev Willem JJ Glashouwer
President Christians for Israel International

Psalm 83: 'So that they will seek Your name'



The Israeli President, Isaac Herzog, addressed the worldwide community on 9 October 2023, and said: "Not since the Holocaust have so many Jews been murdered in one day. The cruelty, the brutality, the barbarity of monsters—not of humans—of monsters. And not since the Holocaust have we witnessed scenes of Jewish women and children, grandparents—even Holocaust survivors—being driven into trucks and abducted as hostages. Hamas has adopted and embraced ISIS cruelty. Entering ordinary resident's homes on a Holy Jewish Holiday (*Simchat Torah*), and cold bloodedly murdering entire families and relatives, young and old. Kicking, hitting, torturing, violating and burning bodies."

Hatred Against Israel

Hatred against Israel is profoundly hatred against the God of Israel. Triumphant you could hear a Muslim leader say: "This is only the beginning." But this battle will be waged worldwide. Jews and Christians: destroy and obliterate. The entire world will be submitted to Islam. The holy city of Islam, Jerusalem, Al-Quds, will be purified in the name of the prophet Muhammad."

Psalm 83

How does the Jewish writer of *Psalm 83* react on this? Does he beg the Most High to save his life and rescue him? No, not primarily. He says: Lord, give them a tremendous thrashing... so that they will seek Your name, O Lord! (*verse 16-18*). He says: "... To let them know that you, whose name is the Lord—that you alone are the Most High over all the earth." This is his deepest motivation. That is his ultimate prayer. That they will look for and find the One and only true God. If not, then they will be lost forever.

Read Psalm 83 and pray for Israel with the words of this Psalm.

Signs of Faith

By Kees de Vreugd

Hanukkah

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

A *hanukiah* is a menorah, a candlestick, with nine arms. You are probably familiar with it. It is used at the *Hanukkah* festival. Actually, it is more accurate to say that it has eight lamps and a ninth loose lamp with which to light the others. This loose lamp is called the *shamash*, the 'servant'.

The *Hanukkah* festival celebrates the victory of the Jews over Greek oppression in 165 BC. The Greek king Antiochus Epiphanes IV had desecrated the temple. The Jews had rebelled under the leadership of the

Maccabees, a priestly family, and succeeded in driving out the Greeks. The temple was cleansed, and the altar was rededicated. The feast of rededication lasted eight days, like the feast of the dedication of Solomon's temple (*1 Kings 8*). The temple was festively illuminated, as it was during the Feast of Tabernacles. The *hanukiah* recalls that festively lit temple. Its history can be read in the books of the Maccabees.

The *Talmud* records that the amount of consecrated oil available for the *ner tamid*, the lamp that always burns in the temple, was only just enough for one day. A great miracle happened there: for eight days, the menorah burned on that small amount of oil. Hence the feast is also called the 'Feast of Lights'. It is celebrated today by lighting one candle or lamp on the

first night of *Hanukkah*, two on the second, and so on until all the candles are lit on the eighth night.

Hanukkah begins on 25 *Kislew*. *Kislew* is the winter month of the Jewish calendar. This year, *Hanukkah* is from December 7 to December 15.

Two basic rules apply to the *hanukiah*: the lights must be in a straight line and the same height. Other than that, artists and designers can take all the liberty to make something beautiful out of it, and they do.

Oil is a central element in the story. Therefore, it is best if the lights are lit on olive oil. But candles are good too. Lighting is done under the pronouncement of the accompanying blessing, after which the *Hanukkah* song *Maoz Tsur* is sung.

Those Who Bring Good News

■ Johannes Gerloff

Theologian, Journalist, Lecturer & Author

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

How shall they hear without a preacher?
(Romans 10:14c)

In verse 8, the Apostle had already spoken about having “to preach” “the word of faith”. The ‘preacher’ is the pivotal point in the fivefold chain of “calling on”, “believing in”, “hearing”, “preaching” and “being sent”.

Today, ‘preaching’ is commonly understood as the public sharing of more or less private thoughts, experiences, insights, knowledge or opinions of the ‘preacher’. In the best case, preaching deals with, among other things, the philosophies and opinions of the *Zeitgeist* (The Spirit of the Age). The Greek word *κηρύσσειν/keryssein*, however, has another meaning.

Originally, the *κηρυξ/keryx* designated the herald who conveyed the emperor’s declaration of his will to his subjects. The personal opinion of the *κηρυξ/keryx* had no meaning at all in the process of proclaiming the sovereign’s intentions. The herald’s person was unimportant in comparison to his message. And the message itself was in no way a ‘private matter’ but binding to all who heard it. Even those who did not want to hear the message were held accountable sooner or later by the one who had sent the *κηρυξ/keryx*.

A herald does not proclaim ‘what he feels’ or ‘what is on his heart’. He neither offers an explanation of his message nor a personal evaluation of the overall situation. He simply proclaims the will of the regent: unchanged, unadulterated and unabridged, but also without any additional explanation. The primary objective of ‘preaching’, therefore, is not the edification of the listener but his taking a stand—his decision, his obedience.

The Babylonian Talmud says: “If someone makes a mistake in public prayer, it is a bad testimony for him who prays. But if he has been assigned by the congregation, it is a bad sign for those who have commissioned him because a man’s agent is equivalent to himself”.

This means that the *κηρυξ/keryx* is not more, but also not less, than the authority that sends him. Sender and envoy are so inseparably connected that the recipient of the message really hears “directly” from the one who has sent the ‘preacher’. Therefore, the angel addresses Sarai’s bondservant Hagar very directly in the



The parable of the Lost Sheep—Matthew 9:36-38. | Photo: Lightstock

name of God, as if he were God Himself. Thus, Jesus is able to say in commissioning his disciples: “Whosoever hears you, hears me; and he that despises you, despises me; and who despises me, despises Him that sent me” (Luke 10:16).

Neither a sense of mission nor talent determines the authority of a *κηρυξ/keryx*. Preaching is not even justified by recognising a legitimate need. This is true, even for Yeshua Himself. When He “saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion for them, because they fainted, and were scattered, as sheep without a shepherd”. Having gained this insight, however, Jesus did not turn to His disciples urging them: “You see what is needed! You have what it needed! Therefore go and offer these disoriented sheep what they need!” Rather, with great humility, he asks His disciples: “The harvest is immense, but the labourers are few. Now, ask the Lord of the harvest, that He will send labourers into His harvest” (Matthew 9:36-38). The fact that he is sent is decisive to the authority of a ‘preacher’. Therefore, the last link in Paul’s chain of questions has to be:

A preacher who has not been sent is as unthinkable as a herald who is not backed up by the authority of an emperor. Every preacher should have the absolute certainty that God has really called him into his ministry. This is just as important to God—as He himself testifies in *Jeremiah 23:21*: “I have not sent these prophets, yet they run. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesy”.

The God of Israel holds these heralds that lack a commission accountable, “you use the expression ‘burden of the Lord’ even though I have sent to you, telling you [explicitly], do not use the term ‘burden of the Lord’. Therefore, look, I will lift you up like a burden and uproot you and the city which I have given to you and your fathers away from my face.

I will bring upon you eternal reproach and everlasting shame, which shall never be forgotten” (*Jeremiah 23:38-40*).

The meaning and function of *κηρυξ/keryx* (= herald, preacher) and *ἀπόστολος/apostolos* (= apostle, envoy) are so closely related that the one can be equated with the other. Therefore, the terms ‘to preach’ and ‘to be sent’ are often parallel in the New Testament.

‘Heralds’ have to ‘be sent’ with a clear and distinct commission. The importance of the message being heard is not in question; “the real question is whether we are the right ones to do it” (Barth). This question must be asked—and never be taken for granted.

Consequently, the choice to preach or not to preach does not lie with the *κηρυξ/keryx*. Timothy is encouraged by his spiritual father to: “Preach the word, be ready in season and out of season” (2 *Timothy 4:2*). And Paul states about himself and his own commission to preach the gospel: “Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!” (1 *Corinthians 9:16*).

Paul, also called Rabbi Sha’ul of Tarsus, had this concept of a *κηρυξ/keryx* in mind when he introduced himself as an ‘apostle’ in his epistles. By claiming to be ‘an envoy of Messiah Yeshua’, Paul essentially positions the doctrinal statements of his epistles on the same level as the authoritative “Verily I say to you” of Christ and the “Thus says the Lord” of Old Testament prophets.

The authenticity of the *κηρυξ/keryx* is established by his message. This is also true in *Jeremiah 23* regarding the false prophets. In our text, the Apostle also gives an indication as to what the content of the message is— just in case the Gentile messengers were truly sent to Israel by the God of Israel:

As it is written: “How pleasant are the feet of those who proclaim good news!” (*Romans 10:15b*)

Reflection

By Roger van Ordt
Former Director C4I Netherlands
Honorary Consul Israel

Hamas Means Violence

Genesis 6:11 says of the time before the flood: “Now the earth was depraved before God, and the earth was full of violence [*hamas*]”. The Hebrew word ‘*hamas*’ means ‘violence’. At that time the Lord repented that he had made man on the earth, which had become a place full of violence, full of *hamas*. Our Saviour compares that time with the time before His Coming. It will be similar to the days of Noah.

Today, the hordes are again walking the streets of Europe to voice their *hamas*, violence. Just as in the 1930s, the Hitler Youth and the SS could indulge their slogans and hatred of Jews undisturbed in parades of violence and destruction, so now Israel is accused of genocide, and Jews are intimidated.

The slogans “from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free” and “death to the Jews” resound through the streets of Europe.

In 2005, Israel withdrew from Gaza. Eight thousand Jews had to leave their communities. They had made parts of Gaza fertile. All of this was destroyed by the Gazans and turned into rocket-launching bases. An area that could have become the Hong Kong of the Middle East has degenerated into an area of Hamas, violence.

Children as young as four who were taught at Hamas and Islamic Jihad summer camps that the only value in life is to kill as many Jews as possible. For Hamas, lives do not count. Only destruction is the goal.

The head of the snake is in Tehran—the tail is in Gaza and Lebanon. Human lives do not count in Iran, either. Cruelty and brutality is the trump card of the Middle East.

God has given Israel grace to face even ‘innocent’ enemies with caution in order to spare the lives of innocent women and children who Hamas use as shields. Israel does not need the world’s encouragement of moderation. The Israel Defence Force uses the utmost caution to avoid civilian deaths.

But the horrific evil called Hamas must be destroyed to enable a new future for Gazans. Golda Meir, Prime Minister of Israel in the last century, said: “Until the Arabs love their children more than they hate us, there will be no peace”.

The Arab world has chosen Hamas. The God of Israel will have mercy on His land and people.

Israel at War: A Multi-Dimensional Conflict

■ Kameel Majdali

Director | Teach All Nations Inc.

Of all the many challenges we face as our 'world is on fire,' nothing has our attention more than the conflict between Israel and Hamas. My phone gets regular notifications of rocket sirens sounding across the country, from the South to the North. The war is definitely 'On.'

The question: Will it be a multi-front war, especially in the North or beyond? Or will it stay contained? Here are at least four parts of this multi-dimensional conflict:

This is a Blood Feud

By definition, a blood feud is an inter-family squabble with a cycle of retaliatory violence. Arabs and Jews are cousins and neighbours, with a history of harmonious community interaction for centuries, even up to now. Yet, if violence erupts, vengeance is a possibility. Middle East memories are long and strong. A 'tit-for-tat' mindset could be a factor, but it's not the most dominant.

This is a Civilisational War

The Israel-Hamas war may appear to be localised, but it really is a global conflict, bringing Western nations to the frontlines. More specifically, it is the ongoing war for the survival of Western civilisation. Based on Biblical Judaeo-Christian principles, the classic West represents some powerful and revered institutions like (monogamous) marriage, family, religious freedom, private property ownership, rule of law, equality of opportunity, minimal government, and maximum freedom. Contrast this with the neo-Marxist/Islamist front (a Berkley professor confirmed that Hamas and Hezbollah were part of the 'progressive global Left'),¹ which detests the West and all that it stands for.

The neo-/cultural Marxists dream of a utopian world of equality of outcomes, of big government that wants to sever the individual's allegiance to nation, faith, family, and freedom. In their place, neo-Marxism promises to meet your needs, keep you safe, and make you equal and happy. But to obtain these benefits, they demand total compliance. Dissent will not be tolerated. Coercion is their *modus operandi*. Those who fall out of line will be dealt with swiftly and severely. In short, the Left wants you to trust and obey big government like a Christian trusts in the Lord.

The Islamist is very similar to the neo-



An Israeli soldier praying near the Israeli border, northern Israel, 5 November 2023. | Photo: Flash90

Marxists and also desires a global realm, except they dream of a worldwide caliphate with Jerusalem as the capital. If the neo-Marxist/Islamist-Jihadi alliance succeeds, there will be an inevitable power struggle between them. Which side do you think will prevail?

So, in summary, this is not merely a nationalist conflict but a global clash of civilisations. Israel, which represents the West, is merely the first pin in the bowling alley. Aim the bowling ball at the correct angle, roll it with skill, and not only will the first pin fly, but so will all the other pins with it. The West are the 'pins.'

This is a Theological War

While the founders of modern Israel were staunch secularists, pious Jews and evangelical Christians saw a prophetic element in the rebirth of the Jewish state. *Jeremiah 16:14-15*, *Isaiah 11:11*, and *Amos 9:14-15* speak of God gathering the dispersed of Israel for the 'second time' from all lands and planting them in their own land, never to be pulled out of it again.

Hamas and many mainstream schools of Islamic law have a very different theology. Their unchanged Charter calls for the elimination of the State of Israel and of all Jews worldwide. They believe that Palestine, captured by the Caliph Omar in 638 AD, became Islamic *waqf*, a sacred and perpetual trust to be reserved for future generations of Muslims until Judgment Day. For the *waqf* to fall into non-Muslim hands is unacceptable, if not blasphemous. Therefore, it is their duty to liberate Palestine from the occupation of the 'infidel Zionists.'

This is a Spiritual War

For the mature, Bible-based and Spirit-led Christian, this should come as no surprise. According to *Ephesians 6:10-18*,

we are to put on the whole armour of God because the fight is not with flesh and blood like Hamas, the ayatollahs, or the Western Left. It's with invisible spiritual powers and hosts of wickedness in the heavenly realm.

Daniel 10 speaks of the 'prince of Persia,' who delayed Daniel's angelic visitor. Decades later, this same spiritual principality instigated Haman's devilish scheme to murder all the Jewish people in the Persian empire. Who knows what spiritual forces govern Gaza, once part of the 'land of the Philistines' in Biblical times?

We are seeing the most horrific manifestations of antisemitism in our lifetime. Unauthorised protestors at the Sydney Opera House chanted "Gas the Jews" less than eighty years after the 'never again' Holocaust. Since 7 October, global antisemitism has risen 1,180%,² and in London alone it has skyrocketed 1,350%.³ If the Jewish people have an end-time prophetic future, then it is no surprise that the forces of darkness seek to destroy them so that these prophecies will not come to pass. They will fail despite the current fury (see *Jeremiah 31:35-37*).

It's war, alright, a multi-dimensional one. In the latter arena—the all-important spiritual dimension—the Church is best equipped to fight. Its armoury is unbeatable (*2 Corinthians 10:4-5*; *Ephesians 6:10-14*; *1 John 3:8*; *4:4*).

Intercessors will save the world!

It's time to be strong in the Lord, put on the whole armour of God, and go to work.

¹https://www.frontpagemag.com/berkeley-professor-hamas-and-hezbollah-are-progressive-and-part-of-global-left/?mc_cid=f97040d210&mc_eid=7719dcc037 Accessed 01 November 2023.

²*Jerusalem Post*, 1 November 2023.

³*The Daily Wire*, 1 November 2023

Report Directly From Israel

By Bryce Turner
National Leader C4I NZ

Evidently, flying into a war zone suggests one is either dodgy or crazy. At least the interrogations we received at several places along the journey would suggest so. No matter how many times I visit Israel, the trip is still a really long grind.

Just to hit the ground running, we started straight from the airport with a visit to the Alzheimer's Medical Centre, which is struggling with an influx of refugee patients who have had to flee the south of Israel or the northern border. It is a great privilege to be able to visit in person and to be able to bless and encourage those who are facing this tragedy and its aftermath.

Then, travelling to Jerusalem, one could be forgiven for not realising that there is a war on except for the flags. Israeli flags fly everywhere. Tens of thousands. A unity I haven't seen before. Not just from Jewish Israelis, though; Arab Israelis—some 2.5 million of them—are grieving too. Attacked and killed by the terrorists or their rockets, homes damaged or destroyed, these Israelis have been violated just the same as their Jewish neighbours. And then there's the posters. They are everywhere. Each one is the face and name of a pawn in Gaza's power games. Each one represents not just an innocent person being held in a terrorist's lair, but the friends and family left waiting, longing, and aching.

We found our accommodation, checked in with the Hineni team, and then grabbed some sleep before reporting for duty the following morning.

Having come to serve in whatever way was useful, we had anticipated hours peeling potatoes and washing dishes. So far, we haven't really done any of that, as it was quickly revealed that Hineni, the humanitarian restaurant in Jerusalem that C4I has supported for many years, had other uses for us.

And so we've fixed things. Lights, machinery/equipment, plumbing, electrical, we've been flat-out getting through Benjamin Philip's long—and growing—list. It is great to be able to sort out some of these issues, allowing the foundation to operate unhindered.

As we sit together at lunch, surrounded by needy folk of all shapes, sizes and colours, we bring encouragement. There are people here who survived the horrors of Nazi Germany, escaping death camps, who remember the explosion of racism and prejudice that became known as *Kristallnacht* (Night of Broken Glass, 1938)

The whole world said "never again". And yet here we are.

Christmas Tree or Palm Branch?

■ Kees de Vreugd

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

Hanukkah is not Christmas, of course. Yet there are a few striking details that make a closer look interesting, without wanting to directly compare or equate the festivals.

Take the date. *Hanukkah* is celebrated on 25 Kislev and the seven following days (a total of eight, that is, like the Feast of Tabernacles). Christmas is celebrated on 25 December. *Hanukkah* is a festival of lights (*Josephus, Jewish Antiquities XII*). Christmas is a festival of lights. This is not surprising considering that in the northern hemisphere, where they originate, both festivals fall in the dark days of winter (*John 10:22*: it was winter). In the darkest days of the year, we long for light. So, is there a connection after all?

Hanukkah

For the origins of *Hanukkah*, we have to go to the books of the *Maccabees* (100 BC). Several places mention the institution and the first celebration of the feast. We read there that the Greek king Antiochus Epiphanes IV had an 'abomination of desolation' built on the altar on 15 Kislev and had sacrifices offered for it on 25 Kislev (*1 Maccabees 1:54*).

"Therefore, in the month of Kislev, celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles"
(*2 Maccabees 1:9*)

Earlier, the king had ordered his entire kingdom by letter to 'form one people and give up their own customs' (*verses 41-42*). So, a unified culture and religion were also implemented in Jerusalem. The temple was dedicated to the Olympian Zeus (*2 Maccabees 1:2*), the Greek chief god.

The date 15 Kislev is also noteworthy. Could it be that the king decreed festivities around the solstice? Or perhaps he wanted his own appearance as a deity (*Epiphanes*) to be celebrated? The fact is that people were also forced to participate in the monthly sacrificial meal for the king's birthday (*2 Maccabees 1:7*).

Feast of Tabernacles

The rededication after the cleansing of the temple was also on 25 Kislev (*1 Maccabees 4:52-59*)—i.e. the same date as that of the desecration. The celebration of the rededication harked back to the original dedication of Solomon's temple, which took place during the Feast of Tabernacles (*1 Kings 8*). The association was so strong that there is spoken of the Feast of Tabernacles in the month of Kislev:

"Therefore, in the month of Kislev, celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles" (*2 Maccabees 1:9*).

"Full of joy, they celebrated for eight days, in the manner of the Feast of Tabernacles, remembering how only recently they should have celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles in caves in the rocks, like animals in the wild. They carried sticks decorated with foliage, green twigs and palm branches and sang songs of praise to him who had enabled them to cleanse his house. By general decree, it was decreed that henceforth all the Jewish people would celebrate these days every year" (*2 Maccabees 10:6-8*).

At *Hanukkah*, then, the memory of *Sukkot* lives on. A



Lighting candles on the last night of the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah. | Photo: Flash90

brightly lit temple takes centre stage. It was so at the dedication; it is so again at *Hanukkah*. In one breath, the two feasts are mentioned, along with the 'fire', which recalls the fire that descended from heaven to light the sacrifice (*2 Chronicles 7:1*). Praises from green trees and palm branches (the *lulav* of *Sukkot*) also return to the temple at *Hanukkah*.

Solstice

That *Hanukkah* may have originally been related to the solstice is not generally believed. However, the *Talmud* does mention the Roman solstice festival. The *Tractate Avodah Zarah* (on idolatry) states that a Jew should not do business with the Gentiles three days before and three days after a pagan festival so as not to be associated with idolatry. Among the holidays mentioned are the *Saturnalia* and the *Kalendae*. The *Saturnalia* were celebrated on 17 December in honour of Saturn, god of agriculture and sown grain. The duration of the festival ranged from three days to a week. The *Kalendae* followed from 25 December to 1 January. The *Kalendae* traditionally had to do with fixing the year. The *Saturnalia* were connected to the winter solstice. We also find this in the *Talmud*: the *Saturnalia* are the eight days before the winter solstice.

An old Jewish story (*in Talmud Avodah Zarah*) tells that Adam when he was driven out of paradise, noticed at one point that the days were getting shorter and shorter. Then he became afraid that this was the punishment for his sin, 'to dust thou shalt return', that the world was gradually falling back into the *tohu wavohu*, 'desolate and empty', of the beginning of creation. He started fasting

and praying for eight days. Then he noticed that the days were getting longer again. Apparently, this is the order of the world, he concluded. Then he celebrated for eight days. He did so again the next year. Adam instituted these feasts for Heaven, but the pagans later turned them into idolatrous feasts, this lore concludes.

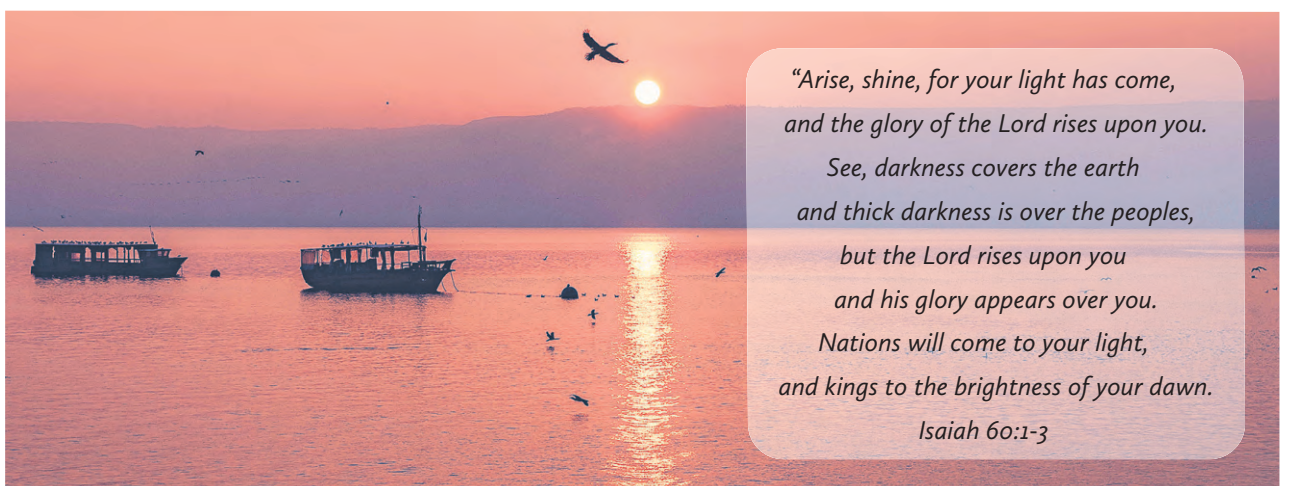
In short, this is a primal experience. But you can attribute the experience of the changing of the seasons, and midwinter in particular, to the Most High but also to the wrong powers.

On the Road

Christmas is a feast of Light. The light shines in the darkness. Jesus is the Light of the world. It is, however, on the Feast of Tabernacles that Jesus says: "I am the Light of the world."

The light born with the Feast of Tabernacles illuminates even the darkest days of the year. On Christmas, it shines even stronger. We experience that same primal experience of Adam but then remember the second Adam, who himself is the Light that shines in the darkness.

"The Word became flesh and 'pitched his tent among us'" (*John 1:14*) is the Gospel reading of Christmas morning. The tent is the tabernacle. Or is it the Tabernacle, the sanctuary in the desert? And so we come again to the temple as the shining centre, inviting us to go on our way, from year to year as pilgrims to bow down before the King, the Lord of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles (*Zechariah 14:16*). Let us go.



"Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.
See, darkness covers the earth
and thick darkness is over the peoples,
but the Lord rises upon you
and his glory appears over you.
Nations will come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.
Isaiah 60:1-3

Young People from Ukraine to Israel—Despite the War

Just in September, an international Christians for Israel (C4I) team accompanied 26 Jewish teenagers from all over Ukraine on their way to Warsaw Airport for a new life in Israel. How are they doing in their new homeland, which has been under severe attack? And what about the young people already sitting on packed suitcases for the next flight?

■ By Anemone Rüger & Alina Gryadchenko
Christians for Israel International

A few weeks ago, 26 young people from Ukraine's Jewish communities ventured out into a new life in Israel after years of preparation, accompanied by a Ukrainian-Dutch-German C4I team. Through the Na'aleh and Selah youth programmes, Israel's Jewish Agency enables young people from the former Soviet Union to obtain their high school diploma in Israel or to continue their education in Israel. Exactly one month after their arrival, news of the devastating Hamas massacres went around the world.

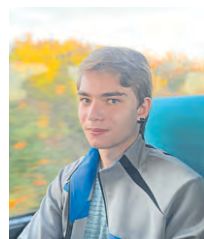
"They Are All Safe"

"All the young people who arrived from Ukraine on 7 September are safe." This relieving message reaches us from the Jewish Agency. Tanya, our contact person in Belaya Tserkov near Kiev, also has good news. "Veronika, one of the Na'aleh girls from our Jewish community, was assigned to a school in Kfar Silver, not far from Ashkelon. She is doing well. She has been evacuated with seven teenagers from her class to another school farther north. The programme coordinators are very dedicated to taking care of the kids."

A second group was scheduled to go to Israel in October. What about these young people? Surely, the *Aliyah* has come to a standstill for the time being after the horrific events of 7 October? Not at all.

Via Budapest to Israel

As I write these lines, at the beginning of November, a bus with 16 promising young people and several C4I staff from Ukraine is on its way to Budapest. The flight had to be postponed several times due to the war in Israel, but now these amazing young people are ready to go and start a new life in the land of their ancestors.



Gleb, 16, comes from near Dnepropetrovsk in eastern Ukraine. He is the youngest of four siblings—and the first to go to Israel. He would normally be in 11th grade now, but two years of Corona and two years of war in Ukraine have severely limited his

educational opportunities. "In Israel, I want to do three more years of high school," Gleb says. "Definitely learn Hebrew well, then do my army service. I will take every opportunity to do my part for Israel."



Oleg, 19, is from Kiev. His parents had made *Aliyah* before but then returned with him to Ukraine. His brother lives in Haifa. Now, Oleg, too, has decided to return to his original homeland, learn Hebrew, and join the army. "I am not afraid of the war," Oleg says. "I thought it over carefully, and I decided that I do want to live in



16 young people say goodbye on their way to Israel on 1 November.



Arrival at Ben Gurion airport where Koen Carlier welcomed the group.

Israel. I want to stand by Israel in this difficult time and make it even stronger!"

Firm Resolve



Margarita, 18, comes from Kherson—the city on the Black Sea that has been under constant attack across the Dnieper River since Russian troops left just over a year ago. "We survived the whole occupation there," Margarita says. "But once they were gone from the city, it got really bad. We were bombed non-stop. Those were terrible days. There was no electricity, no water, nothing." The family decided to flee—first to Odessa, then to Uzhgorod. There, Margarita made the decision to go to Israel. "Mom encouraged me a lot—first to learn Hebrew well and then to study architecture," Margarita says. "But that was at the beginning of the year. Now, Israel is at war. Mom is worried, of course, but she also knows that everything will be fine." Margarita's grandma and great-grandma are living in Haifa. "My mind was made up all along," Margarita says. "I have nothing to lose by going. But if I didn't go, I would lose a lot."



Eva also comes from eastern Ukraine. Her older brother has been in Israel for seven years. Eva wants to focus on studying the language first, then study design. "And, of course, I'm going to join the army, definitely! No, I'm not afraid. Not at all. Staying in Ukraine is much more

dangerous, and I don't see a future there. Yes, there is also a war going on in Israel now, but it's a different war. Israel is a strong country. There is nothing that can stop the spirit and the determination of the Israelis!" Photos: Christians for Israel

Please pray for these courageous young people who are set on fulfilling their and God's dreams for their lives despite the rough circumstances.

Would you also help us invest in their future? Every donation helps! Select donate option Aliyah Ukraine.

Our Projects Overview

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.

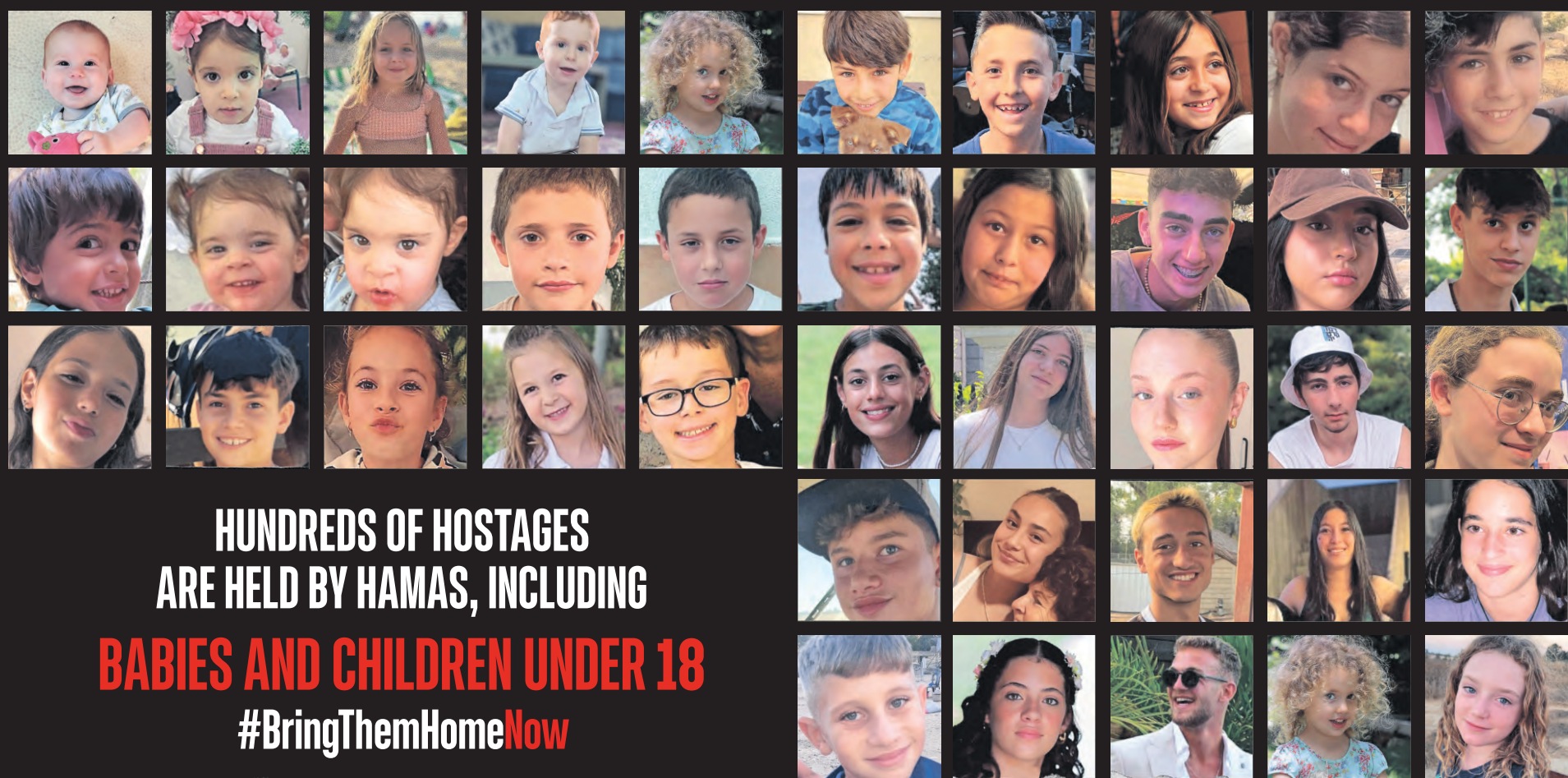


Arab Christians

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



HUNDREDS OF CIVILIANS WERE TAKEN HOSTAGE BY HAMAS IN A BRUTAL TERROR ATTACK ON ISRAEL

HOSTAGES AND MISSING FAMILIES FORUM

YES! I Want to Support Christians for Israel

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- ☐ My donation for ministry costs, print & post

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

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- ☐ Israel: Covenants & Kingdom (*Book*) by Willem JJ Glashouwer
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Bank Account No: NL12 ABNA 06275.15.460

Bank: ABN-AMRO Bank, Nijkerk, The Netherlands

BIC/Swift code: A B N A N L 2 A

Please confirm by emailing international@c4israel.org

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: