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CHRISTIANS FOR
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Understanding Israel and world events from a Biblical perspective

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Israelis calling for the release of the hostages held by Hamas terrorists in Gaza. | Photo: Flash90

Israel's Hostage Tragedy—and Dilemma

On 7 October 2023, thousands of Hamas terrorists slaughtered some 1,200 people across more than 20 communities in southern Israel. They seized 253 hostages and took them to Gaza.

As of early February, it is believed that 132 are still in captivity after a week-long truce in late November saw the release of 105 hostages. Four hostages were released prior to the November truce, and troops rescued one other. The bodies of eight hostages have also been recovered, and three others were mistakenly killed by the Israeli military.

However, a report was released in early February—the eve of the fourth month of the war

between Israel and the Gaza terror group—confirming that thirty-two of these hostages are no longer alive and that the IDF is also assessing ‘unconfirmed intelligence’ that at least twenty additional hostages may have also been killed.

This was a huge shock to a nation already grieving its lost ones and living in hope that the remaining hostages would be released.

While Israel grieves, Hamas is cynically using the Israeli hostages as human shields and as bargaining chips in its demand for a cease-fire.

The Israeli government has consistently stated since

7 October that the twin aims of the war are the release of the hostages and the elimination of Hamas. These are, of course, potentially conflicting aims.

The longer the war lasts, the more domestic pressure on the government to agree on a cease-fire at any price in order to ensure the release of the hostages. Moreover, after four months of war, Israel is under increasing international demands to reach an agreement with Hamas that would ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza, in which less than the full number of hostages and deceased will be handed over, and the release of many Hamas terrorists from Israeli goals.

4



UNRWA Aims to Combat Israel's Existence

6



"Is it Ok to Eat?" Child Hostages Ask

9



International Holocaust Remembrance Day

16



Food Parcels for Jewish Communities



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

Colophon

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Mission

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

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Zero-Tolerance Policy Needed

■ Andrew Tucker

International Editor | Christians for Israel

It is becoming clear that there is a vast global network of interrelated entities, countries and other interests that supported the Hamas terrorist attack on 7 October 2023 and are continuing to support terror against Israel. The United Nations system is also infiltrated by these interests. It is time to put an end to this.

‘Terror’ is defined as the use of violent or destructive acts (such as bombing) committed by groups in order to intimidate a population or government into granting their demands.

Hamas is, by definition, a terrorist organisation. As its 1988 Charter shows, it is an Islamist movement committed to the use of violence in order to “obliterate Israel” and “raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine”. For Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other similar Islamist groups, the mere existence of the State of Israel is seen as an obstacle to the reign and rule of Allah.

Although the immediate goal is the rule of Islam and Sharia law in all of Palestine, the movement is a global one. For example, Article 2 of the Hamas Covenant reads: “The Islamic Resistance Movement is one of the wings of Moslem Brotherhood in Palestine. Moslem Brotherhood Movement is a universal organisation which constitutes the largest Islamic movement in modern times. It is characterised by its deep understanding, accurate comprehension and complete embrace of all Islamic concepts of all aspects of life, culture, creed, politics, economics, education, society, justice and judgement, the spreading of Islam, education, art, information, science of the occult and conversion to Islam.”

The use of violence and killing innocent people in order to achieve this goal is promoted by Iran, Qatar and Turkey, which are now the main sponsors and supporters of global Islamist terror.

Hamas is deeply embedded in UN institutions such as UNRWA, as explained by Jonathan Tobin in this edition.

The European Union (and its member states) is financing Hamas through the support of the PA, Palestinian organisations, UNRWA and other UN institutions connected to Hamas. Although Hamas is on various terror lists, sanctions are weak and poorly implemented and policed.

The legal proceedings against Israel in international institutions like the International Court of Justice (ICJ), International Criminal Court (ICC) and UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) are, to a large extent, expressions of these political, ideological, religious and economic interests.

Western governments must insist that no concessions should be made to any person or entity that supports acts of terror. This should be a red line for all Western nations.

This also means they should reject the idea that acts of terror committed by Hamas operating from Gaza on a continual basis since 2006 (not to mention its fellow Iranian proxies such as Hezbollah in Lebanon) in order to obliterate Israel, should somehow compared with the acts of Israel—a sovereign, democratic state—in defending its citizens. The tragic killing of innocent Palestinian civilians in the course of a legitimate war of self-defence cannot be compared morally with the intentional and indiscriminate slaughter of innocent

Jews simply because they are Jews.

To claim that Israel is committing genocide is beyond comprehension—and yet, South Africa has succeeded in capturing the world's attention and even obtaining a hearing at the ICJ in The Hague. Even though the Court on 26 January did not order the immediate cease-fire that South Africa asked for, South Africa, Hamas, Iran and their allies won a massive PR victory by virtue of the fact that the Court ruled that it is ‘plausible’ that Israel is committing genocide.

Thanks to social media, the idea that the Jews are guilty of genocide has now been planted in the hearts and minds of a new generation that has been brainwashed by woke Marxist ideologies and is largely ignorant of history.

In the meantime, the world looks on as Hamas continues to hold hostages and the bodies of deceased Israelis in blatant contravention of international law and morality.

Over the past months, the PA has shown that it shares Hamas' commitment to terror as a weapon. This means that a two-state solution governed by the Fatah-ruled Palestinian Authority (PA) should be off the table for the time being.

The culture of terror and violence is the curse of the Middle East and is extending to Western nations. The complete abandonment of terror should be a condition precedent (sine qua non) to the provision of ANY Western financial aid to UNRWA, the Palestinian Authority or any other entity that seeks to support the Palestinian people of advance Palestinian self-determination claims. A new system is needed.

Prayer Points

Israel

- “The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” *Psalms 34:18*. Pray for all hostages still being held in Gaza today. Pray that they will be alive and quickly released or found. Pray also that despite the terrible conditions they are in, they may experience that God is with them.
- Pray for wisdom for the Israeli government and the leadership of the Israeli Defense Forces to constantly make the right decisions about the military operation in Gaza and the distribution of troops across the country. Pray for God's peace in the hearts of Israelis and give thanks for the unity that prevails among the people.
- Pray for the innocent people in Gaza who are stuck in the middle of the war and whose living situation is dangerous. Pray that aid will reach these people and pray that Hamas will stop using its own citizens as human shields.

Israel & the Nations

- Israel is constantly accused of violating international law and has even had to defend itself at the International Court of Justice in The Hague against

charges of genocide. Pray for Israel's legal protection.

- “My God sent His angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions.” *Daniel 6:22a*. Great danger still threatens Israel on all its borders. Threats from Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon, terrorists in Judea Samaria and the Houthis in the south by the Red Sea. Pray that God's angels will be all around Israel to protect it as an angel protected Daniel in the lion's den.

Christians for Israel

- Give thanks to all Christians worldwide who support Israel by praying for Israel, donating money, or even volunteering in Israel. Pray that the group of Christians who stand with Israel will continue to grow and that the connection between Jews and Christians will become stronger.
- Give thanks for the work Koen Carlier and his team are doing in Ukraine among the Jewish community and Holocaust survivors. Conditions are tough because of the winter and the ongoing war, and there is much poverty. Pray that many people will be helped.

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

Fragile Consensus in Israel

■ Yochanan Visser
Correspondent in Israel

On 7 October 2023, Hamas, aided by Palestinian Islamic Jihad and civilians, not only slaughtered more than 1,200 Israelis but also killed the hope that there would ever be a peaceful solution to the more than century-old conflict with the Palestinian Arabs. Other consequences are unique in the history of the State of Israel, as we will see.

When I read the first reports of events on 7 Oct. and saw that hundreds of rockets had been fired into Israel, my first reaction was: here we go again.

I watched in amazement as the stream of updates on my smartphone showed that Hamas was invading southern Israel, and my first thought was, how?? How could this happen??

As someone who has been writing for almost eight years about the so-called multi-front war that Iran was preparing for Israel and was aware of the IDF's preparations for such a war, those were my first thoughts.

Through all the documents and information I had received over the years about Iran and the IDF's operations in what in Israel was called MABAM (*Milchama bin haMilchamot*), the war between the wars, I had become convinced that the army was excellently prepared for this war.

Because the information provided in the first hours of that *Black Shabbat* was poor and often based on eyewitness accounts over the telephone, my question was left hanging in the air.

Many in Israel realised that action had to be taken. In my case, that meant setting up a war room from which I could send updates to the live blog on the Christians for Israel website.

For others, it meant collecting army equipment, a weapon and then rushing southward or booking a plane ticket on the first plane available to fly to Israel.

I think that after the initial shock, everyone understood that we were in a state of emergency and that action had to be taken. What happened in the days after the full extent of the genocide became clear can safely be called unique in the history of Israel.

The people of Israel spontaneously took over the country with thousands of volunteers, leaving everything behind and starting initiatives that would contribute to the survival of Israel and to the care of the victims who survived the massacre since that was the general feeling; Israel was engaged in a second War of Independence.

To a lesser extent, we saw something similar after the suicide bombing of the Park Hotel in Netanya on *Seder* evening,



Israeli volunteers help out with the tomato harvest at a Moshav in the Sharon area. | Photo: Flash90

the first day of *Passover* at the end of March 2002. Thirty people were killed in that attack and 140 injured. It was the timing (the most important evening on the Jewish calendar) that caused many people to take action immediately.

Also then, thousands of IDF reservists came to their bases without *Tzaf Shmoneh* (mobilisation order). There was also a similar determination to put an end to the wave of suicide bombings, but now an even stronger reaction was noticeable. Expat Israelis returned to Israel to re-enlist in the IDF or to help with the hundreds of private initiatives that had been launched since the genocide took place.

Others left their jobs to help identify those murdered, and the same people who were behind the anti-government protest campaign in the months before 7 Oct. now began an international campaign to bring home the more than 240 abductees.

In social terms, a revolutionary change also took place. While the various groups in Israeli society were 7 Oct. diametrically opposed to each other, and some even used the word civil war at the time, now those divisions suddenly seemed to have disappeared and made way for brotherly unity.

Ultra-Orthodox Jews who had always refused to serve in the IDF now signed up in droves to receive emergency training in the use of weapons and wanted to join the two fronts that had already emerged.

Left-wing activists who were always found at pro-Palestinian demonstrations suddenly changed their minds and fought side by side with right-wing religious soldiers in combat units. A large number of these activists have now been cured of the peace illusions they always harboured and say there is no partner to talk to.

Politically, we saw that politicians who had fought each other day in and day out now formed a war cabinet together, and there was an overriding consensus that Israel was fighting for its survival and that Hamas had to be indefinitely defeated.

That consensus still exists, although there is now a difference of opinion about the two goals of the war with Hamas, and this is especially evident over the question of what to do with the 134 hostages held in Gaza.

For those involved in the international campaign to free the hostages, this issue is more important than a victory over Hamas, but the vast majority of the Israeli public insists on not stopping the war again and continuing fighting to the end, even if that means losing some of the hostages.

For the first time, it appears that Israel will not give in to foreign pressure to stop the war over the humanitarian problem in Gaza.

A new ceasefire is only beneficial for Hamas, which now has to fear the end of its rule in Gaza, although there is enormous internal pressure on the government of PM Benjamin Netanyahu to agree to another agreement because of the 134 hostages Hamas is holding.

Then there is Hezbollah in Lebanon, which has been waging a war of attrition against Israel since 8 October, and here, too, there is consensus that the situation as it existed before 7 Oct. can no longer be tolerated.

The nearly one hundred thousand evacuees who have been transferred from their homes along the border with Lebanon to hotels and holiday homes in northern Israel are united in their demand for an end to Hezbollah's presence along the border. Until that is the case, they will not return home.

Some of these evacuees told me they had been told by the government that there was no chance of returning home before *Passover* at the end of April. Many of these evacuees have now rented vacant houses or vacation homes and are trying to resume their daily routine in one way or another as compensation measures have been introduced to undo at least some of the financial damage suffered by these families.

Short News

Shelter's Improved



Israel's public shelters are in dire need of repair and contemporary communications equipment. The Israeli Ministry of Communications, therefore, releases a budget to improve the nearly 4,000 shelters in the border regions. | Photo: Flash90

Concerns about the Bnei Menashe

The Bnei Menashe (one of the lost tribes) reside in northeastern India. In early January, seven members of the Bnei Menashe were killed by a rocket attack. It is unclear who is responsible for the attack, and there is no reason to believe that the attack was specifically directed at the Jewish community. It is plausible that it has to do with the flaring ethno-religious conflict between the Hindus and the Kuki tribe, which is predominantly Christian and in which the Bnei Menashe are included. There are now calls in the Knesset in Israel to accelerate the return of the Bnei Menashe from India. About 5,500 Bnei Menashe remain in India.

Reward Offered

The US is offering \$10 million for information leading to the unravelling of the financial network of the terror group Hamas. There is also an award for any information on donors, financial institutions that facilitate the transactions and companies that provide technology for this purpose.

Israel Condemned Twice as Often



Last year, the United Nations General Assembly condemned Israel twice as often as all other countries combined. This is shown in a report by UN Watch. Israel was condemned 14 times, and there were seven decisions condemning other countries. Terrorist groups were not condemned at all. | Photo: Shutterstock

UNRWA Aims to Combat Israel's Existence

■ **By Jonathan S. Tobin**
Editor-in-chief | JNS

As a result of revelations that 12 employees of UNRWA—the UN refugee agency dedicated to assisting the Palestinians—took part in the Hamas pogroms in southern Israel on 7 October and that approximately 10% of UNRWA employees are either active members or have ties to Hamas or Palestinian Islamic Jihad, many of the governments that are the principal funders of UNRWA, including the United States, which is the largest donor giving \$422 million to it in 2023, have placed a stop on their funding of UNRWA and since expressed various levels of concern or outrage.

An Unaccountable UN Agency

If the past is any indication of the future, even those who have spoken out about this, like the United States, will eventually, even if quietly, resume full funding of UNRWA. The reason for this is that UNRWA has made itself indispensable to the business of caring for Palestinians in Gaza. It is, as it has been for the last 75 years, the primary conduit of assistance to a population that has been made dependent on the international community for all services, including employment. As such, it can and does present itself to the world as the embodiment of philanthropy, providing sustenance to an enormous number of people in need.

That is why any effort to investigate its activities and penalise it for its close ties to terrorists is always derailed by invoking its good works and the notion that if it were shut down, millions would starve.

The only theoretical hope for there to be peace between Israel and the Palestinians must start with the abolition of institutions that not only provide assistance and employment to terrorists but have as their purpose the perpetuation of a futile quest to destroy the one Jewish state on the planet. UNRWA must not merely be defunded. It must be abolished.

A World Full of Refugees

The very fact of its existence is a function of the way the international community has acted to prevent a resolution of the conflict.

When UNRWA was created by the United Nations in 1949, the plight of refugees was among the world's most pressing problems. Up to 60 million people were displaced in Europe during and immediately after the Second World War.

That included those Jews who had survived the Holocaust seeking to go to Israel or the West, as well as millions of others who had been uprooted for one

reason or another. Among them were ethnic Germans who were thrown out of their homes throughout Eastern Europe, including traditionally German regions like East Prussia. As Europe adjusted to new borders largely imposed by the demands of the Soviet Union, many people were forcibly evicted and told to move to places where their ethnicity would be welcomed. Any who resisted were not supported by the international community. They were violently repressed, imprisoned and forgotten.

Nor was Europe the only region where there was a refugee crisis. When Britain abandoned its rule of India, the subcontinent was partitioned into two separate nations—largely Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan. The drawing of those lines on the map created 14 million people who found themselves on the wrong side of the new borders and became refugees. More than 1 million people died in the ethnic and religious violence there as massive populations scrambled to find new homes.

Arab and Jewish Refugees

Coming around the same time as the catastrophe caused by the partition of India was the refugee problem caused by Britain's leaving another of its former possessions: the Mandate for Palestine. The United Nations voted to partition Palestine into two states: one for the Jews and one for the Arabs, with Jerusalem being an international enclave. While the Jews accepted the partition scheme, the Arabs did not. The leaders of the Palestinian Arabs—like the pro-Nazi Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin Al-Husseini—declared war on the Jews. Neighboring Arab nations supported them and invaded the newborn State of Israel on its first day of existence in May 1948.

The Arab war to destroy Israel not only failed; the fighting led hundreds of thousands of Arabs in the former Mandate to flee. A small minority were forced out by Israelis during bitter fighting in some areas. But most of them left out of fear of what would happen to them if they fell under the rule of Jews (and with the expectation that they would take over all the land once the Jews were “thrown into the sea”).

During the same period, as approximately 700,000 Arabs became refugees, some 800,000 Jews either fled or were forced to flee their homes in the Arab and Muslim world, where they had lived for centuries.

The Jewish refugees were resettled in a massive philanthropic project funded by Jews around the world. Most of those



Caption: A Palestinian man outside the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Gaza City protests cuts to aid on 20 June 2023. | Photo: Shutterstock.

refugees went to Israel, where they faced hardships in what was then a very poor and embattled country. Today, their descendants make up about half the Jewish population and have contributed enormously to its defence and flourishing as a modern state. Others found new homes in the United States and other parts of the world.

Unlike every other refugee population, the Palestinian Arabs were not resettled. They were kept in camps throughout the Middle East, with the largest concentration in Gaza, which was controlled by Egypt from 1949 to 1967. They were prevented from finding new homes in Arab and Muslim countries, where they spoke the language and shared a common culture. Nor were they enabled to go elsewhere to make new lives.

Instead, they were kept in place to wait for the day when they could “go home” to their former villages in what was now Israel. Their leaders and the rest of the Arab world opposed their resettlement, doing all they could to prevent it.

And the agency that enabled this policy to continue for generations was none other than UNRWA.

The United Nations created two refugee agencies. One, UNRWA, deals only with the Palestinians. The other, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (or UNHCR), has the responsibility for all of the other refugees in the world.

The UNHCR has its flaws, but its job is to help the refugees by giving them not just immediate aid in surviving being displaced by wars and other disasters but also assistance in resettling in places where it will be safe for them. Their goal is to ensure that their problems are resolved and that their children will make new lives rather than continue to live in camps.

By contrast, the UNRWA exists solely to ensure that Palestinian refugees are

never resettled. That's why almost all of the people who are called Palestinian refugees are the descendants of the people who fled the war the Arab world started in 1948. Several generations have been born in the camps, but contrary to the way other populations are treated, all are given the same status as those who were the original 1948 refugees.

A humane and rational policy would have led to their being absorbed into other populations. But that's not UNRWA's job. It operates the ultimate welfare state in which generations are kept dependent on charity. Worse than that, its programs and policies all encourage the Palestinians to go on believing that someday Israel will cease to exist, and then they can return to where their grandparents and great-grandparents lived three-quarters of a century ago. Though it pretends to be a humanitarian force, it encourages its charges to look forward to the day when Hamas's genocidal objective—the mass murder of Israel's 7 million Jews—will be achieved.

Therefore, it's little surprise that UNRWA is riddled with supporters of Hamas and that among its staff are people who take part in terrorist atrocities. And that much of the aid it receives from the world goes to help Hamas continue to function. UNRWA allows the very people its donors think are helping to be used as human shields in a cynical, hopeless war.

UNRWA needs to be abolished and replaced by a genuine agency that can give Palestinians new homes rather than keep them in misery, awaiting another Holocaust for the Jews that they've been led to believe will magically solve their problems.

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Hamas Leader: Replace Israel with 'Palestine'

■ JNS

Hamas leader Khaled Mashal rejected the two-state solution in a recently aired interview, emphasising that the terrorist group's goal of replacing Israel with a Palestinian state was more attainable after Hamas's 7 October massacre.

Mashal made the comments during a three-part discussion with Kuwaiti podcaster Amar Taki posted in the second week of January. The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) published a translated excerpt.

The Hamas leader, who was living in Qatar as of last year, said that "we have nothing to do with the two-state solution. We reject this notion because it means that you would get a promise for a [Palestinian] state, yet you are required to recognise the legitimacy of the other state, which is the Zionist entity."

He continued: "This is unacceptable. We demand to be liberated, to get rid of the occupation, and to have our independence and our state. [Israel] is my enemy. It is not my concern."

Mashal suggested that 7 Oct. was a pivotal moment for the movement to

replace Israel with a Palestinian state and remarked on the pro-Hamas demonstrations worldwide that took place after the massacre, in which hordes of heavily armed gunmen murdered 1,200 people, wounded thousands more and took 240 hostages back to Gaza.

"This is unacceptable. We demand to be liberated, to get rid of the occupation, and to have our independence and our state..."

"I believe that the dream and the hope for Palestine from the River to the Sea and from the north to the south has been renewed. This has also become a slogan chanted in the US and in Western capital cities, by the American and Western public," he said.

"*Palestine is free from the River to the Sea*—that's the slogan of the American students and the [students] in European capital cities.

"The Palestinian consensus—or almost a consensus—is that we will not give up on our right to Palestine in its entirety, from the [Jordan] river to the [Mediterranean] sea and from Rosh Hanikra to Eilat or the Gulf of Aqaba," he continued.

7 Oct. "has turned the idea of liberating Palestine from the *River to the Sea* into a realistic idea that has already begun. It is not something [merely] to be expected or hoped for. It is part of the plan, part of the agenda, and we are standing on its threshold, Allah willing."

Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, Gilad Erdan, posted the MEMRI video of the interview to his account, urging those calling for a ceasefire to listen to Mashal's words.

"A ceasefire ensures Hamas' continued rule in Gaza, and this destroys any possibility for a solution to the conflict. Hamas is stating this loud and clear! So if you truly want a solution—you must first support the eradication of Hamas. Stop hiding behind empty words and slogans!"

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Short News

Three Million Tourists



After 7 October, tourism to Israel came to a halt, but in the first nine months of 2023, Israel welcomed some three million visitors. This left the record standing in 2019 when Israel welcomed 4.5 million tourists. But in comparison to 2022, when 2.7 million people visited the country, Israel did attract more visitors last year. That is according to statistics from the Israeli Ministry of Tourism. Tourists visit the country for an average of eight days. Fifty per cent of them are Christian, and a quarter are Jewish. Just over half were visiting Israel for the first time. | Photo: Flashgo

Fewer Antisemitic Reports

Even though the number of reports of antisemitism worldwide increased by five hundred per cent after 7 October, a study shows it doesn't give the full picture. The Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy found that a significant number of incidents go unreported or are misclassified. Significant reasons are authorities' reluctance to recognise antisemitism and the fear of Jewish communities to exaggerate an incident.

Abraham Accords Hold Up



Even though countries that signed the Abraham Accords condemned actions by Israel at the beginning of the war on 7 Oct, the Abraham Accords seem to be holding up. The countries experience pressure from their Arab allies but also face attacks by Iran or its accomplices. Ultimately, however, these countries do not want Hamas to win, preferring Israel to defeat Hamas in order to limit Iran's influence. While the current war may temporarily delay or put the relationship with Israel on hold, in the long run, the countries benefit from a good relationship with Israel, especially in the economic and security fields. | Photo: Flashgo

Israel's Multi-Front War with Iran

■ Yochanan Visser

Correspondent in Israel

The two most dangerous fronts for Israel are Yemen and Lebanon.

In recent weeks, the situation on the front with Hezbollah has escalated, and Israel now appears to be heading for a major war with Iran's most important proxy after diplomatic negotiations through US diplomat Amos Hochstein failed. The IDF now appears to be preparing for a major operation expected to begin within weeks.

According to the Israeli think tank INSS, Hezbollah has 200,000 rockets and advanced mortar shells at its disposal. Thousands of Hezbollah's missiles are equipped with a GPS guidance system and can, therefore, reach their target accurately.

It is estimated that in the event of a full-scale war, Hezbollah will fire 1,200 to 1,500 rockets per day at Israel.

Since Hezbollah has precise intelligence through espionage about Israel's vital civil and military infrastructure, it is to be expected that Israel's economy will come to a virtual standstill and that a very different situation will then exist

than is the case now.

At the moment, there is a business-as-usual situation in large parts of Israel, except for the border areas, but Hezbollah's long-range missiles that can reach all of Israel could bring day-to-day life to a complete standstill.

The second most dangerous front is Yemen, where the Ansar Allah (Houthi) militia continuously attacks civilian shipping. Ansar Allah is helped by advisors from the IRGC and Hezbollah, who are stationed in Yemen, and the international coalition of naval vessels formed under US leadership appears to have made little impression on the Iranian proxy so far despite escalating attacks on the military infrastructure of the militia.

In the capital, Sana'a, there are huge mass demonstrations every week in which Israel and the US are cursed. The American army, together with England, has now carried out seven attacks on Ansar Allah bases in Yemen so far.

However, the militia appears determined to continue its attacks because this will lead to a complete halt to shipping traffic in the Red Sea, where sixteen per cent of

the world's total maritime trade passes every day, so this front has the potential to develop into a global conflict.

Israel is, therefore, in a very difficult position that even dwarfs the situation that occurred in 1967 and 1973 during the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War.

The current multi-front war coincides with the loss of the ability to effectively monitor Iran's nuclear programme, as the IAEA actually reported on 19 January.

Observers in Israel, myself included, fear that Iran will use the current chaos in the Middle East and the obsession with the war in Gaza to move toward a nuclear weapon. The Islamic Republic now has enough uranium, enriched to 60 per cent, which can be upgraded within a few weeks to the 91 per cent needed to produce a nuclear warhead.

This is, in short, the state of affairs in Israel and the Middle East, and it will be clear that the Jewish state will be in serious trouble if the war escalates further according to the 'ring of fire' plan for the destruction of Israel that Iran drew up years ago.

“Is it Ok to Eat?” Child Hostages Ask

■ **Etgar Lefkovits**

JNS.org

It is unclear how long the children will take to recover from their trauma, whether it will be months or even years.

“Is it OK to eat? Can we look out the window? Is it alright to leave the room?” These were among the questions that scores of traumatised Israeli children held hostage for more than 50 days by Hamas in Gaza asked doctors and social workers during their first days of freedom and recuperation.

Slowly, the children began to regain their trust. A half-smile; an immediately-granted after midnight request for schnitzel and mashed potatoes. After some days, they were released from the hospital as doctors worked to help these child hostages return home. Yet their journey is only just beginning.

‘Shadows of Children’ Return Home

They have been called ‘shadows of children’. Thin and emaciated, pallid and fearful, and all of a sudden grown up, some orphaned, others with a parent still left behind in captivity in Gaza.

For over 50 days, many were kept in tiny underground rooms in tunnels with no windows or daylight, recounted Dr Dana Singer-Harel, a paediatrician at Schneider Children’s Hospital in Petach Tikvah, who was part of a team of doctors and social workers who tended to the child hostages after their release from Gaza.

They suffered from meagre food, no sanitary conditions, and the fear of the unknown. Some didn’t know how much time had passed or where they were. The lucky ones had their mothers or siblings with them. Some heard of family

members killed on the Hebrew news radio that their captors were listening to.

Most of the children lost between 10% to 15% of their body weight, the paediatrician said. Some of the children were not allowed to shower even once in their 54-day captivity, while others showered just once with a bucket of water.

“This wasn’t something you can prepare for by reading a medical textbook,” Singer-Harel said in an interview. “It was a case-by-case basis. There was no good way to prepare for this.”

“In my wildest dreams, these were stories that I never thought I would hear,” added Ifat Ezer-Cohen, a hospital social worker.

And those were the lucky ones. Two children, including the youngest hostage, baby Kfir Bibas, and his 4-year-old brother Ariel remain unaccounted for, their fate unknown since they were not released with the rest of the 30-some children freed during the periodic releases held in November.

Most of the children released from captivity were brought to Schneider Children’s Hospital, where they spent between two nights to a week. Besides being emaciated and fearful, many had stomach flu, diarrhoea and lice but were otherwise physically in stable condition, Singer-Harel said. Because of the emotional trauma that they underwent, many of the children had regressive responses and became more child-like, such as wetting their pants after previously being toilet trained, she said.

Those who had their mothers with them fared the best. “It was amazing to see how much better those children who had their mothers with them fared both physically and mentally compared to



Doron Katz Asher and her two young daughters Raz, 4, and Aviv, 2, are reunited with husband and father Yoni, on 25 November 2023. (Schneider Children’s Hospital)

those who were alone,” Singer-Harel said.

The social worker recounted how some of the mothers made up stories so that their children would not be fearful, telling them they were in a safe place because there was a war going on at home. As such, the children called their captors ‘the guards with the beard’ or ‘the guards with the gun,’ she said. “The mothers’ main motivation was to protect their children,” said Ezer-Cohen. “Every choice they made—whether it what they said or how much they ate—was related to how to save their children.”

Recovery

After the children were released from the hospital and back with their friends and relatives, if not at home, which in some cases was damaged or destroyed, it remains unclear how long it will take these children to

recover from their trauma, whether it will be months or even years.

“The mental rehabilitation will take time,” said Singer-Harel. “It is hard to say how long it will be,” said Ezer-Cohen. “This is a journey that they need to recover from.”

Originally published at www.jns.org. Republished with permission.



Emilia Alony, 5, is reunited with her grandmother after she was held hostage in Gaza, 25 November 2023. (Schneider Children’s Hospital)

Bibas Family Marks Kfir’s First Birthday

■ **Amelia Botbol**

JNS.org

“It’s my birthday and no one will celebrate with me,” Yossi Schneider read out from a letter as family members and representatives of the Hostage and Missing Families Forum marked Kfir Bibas’s first birthday in Nir Oz. “It’s my birthday and I am not with my family. It’s my birthday and I don’t get presents. It’s my birthday and I hope that you remember me,” continued Schneider, Shiri Bibas’s cousin.

On 7 October, Shiri, her husband Yarden and their two children, Ariel, 4, and Kfir, then nine months old, were kidnapped by Hamas terrorists in Nir Oz, less than a mile from the Gaza border. Seventy-eight residents of the

kibbutz were kidnapped and another 39 were killed.

For a baby to celebrate his first birthday in captivity has never happened before,” Jimmy Miller, also Shiri’s cousin, told JNS. “These children do not belong in captivity,” he continued. “They are not Hamas’s enemies. They did not do anything to anyone. They are being used as human shields and bargaining chips. The entire world must put pressure on Hamas using all existing means for their release.”

Shortened version of article that was first published on JNS.org, published with permission.



Kfir Bibas was just nine months old when he was ripped from his home and kidnapped by Hamas terrorists. | Photo: Hostages and Missing Families Forum

Experiencing the Holocaust a Second Time

■ **Anat Schneider**
Israel Today

“Never in my life would I have thought that I would experience the Holocaust again,” Tzili Wenkert (82) told us. Her grandson Omer Wenkert was kidnapped to the Gaza Strip by Hamas terrorists on *Black Shabbat*, and Omer’s girlfriend was brutally murdered. Since then, Grandma Tzili has been advocating for her grandson. Anat Schneider had the opportunity to talk to her.

Tzili is a beautiful lady; you can tell that she is courageous and optimistic. The name Tzili refers to the pleasant and gentle sound that comes from the bearer of the name. With great love and endless blessings but almost overwhelmed by pain, she speaks of her kidnapped grandson: “Omer must be released. He suffers from chronic colitis and needs his medication every day. What will happen to him if he no longer takes his daily medication? Where is my Omer now? He is twenty-two, my eldest grandson, a cheerful, polite, good boy. Always friendly to everyone.”

Tzili tells me about Omer and describes his nature. He must be very hardworking and ambitious: “Imagine: He was already running a restaurant with forty employees. It is his dream to develop further as a restaurateur. But for me, Omer will always be a child.”

“What’s worse is that this massacre, this second holocaust, happened at home, in the Land of Israel.”

You can tell Tzili experienced the Holocaust herself as a child. And that all the emotions from that terrible time come rushing back. What’s worse is that this massacre, this second holocaust, happened at home, in the Land of Israel. “They showed me a video; I can’t get it out of my mind. There lies Omer, my child, wearing only his underwear, his hands tied behind his back, on a pickup truck with terrorists all around him. Then he lifts his head and looks into the camera for a moment. I see the fear in his eyes; I can really feel it. Help, God!”

Taken Hostage

She immediately understood that her grandson was held hostage in the Gaza Strip. For her, what she saw with her own eyes was a true holocaust, actually even worse than the one she survived in Europe. “I wouldn’t have thought it possible that I would experience a Holocaust again at my age.” Tzili was born in Romania in 1941. When her family was taken to the ghetto, she was six weeks old. At three-and-a-half years old, she barely survived. She can

remember how German planes bombed the ghetto. Her mother stood at the door of the barracks and hugged her.

What’s worse is that this massacre, this second holocaust, happened at home, in the Land of Israel.

After the Holocaust, the area in which they lived fell to the Soviet Union. It was incredibly difficult to get an exit permit. It only happened after her marriage. In 1965, she, her husband and their families emigrated to Israel.

A Spark of Hope

Since Omer was abducted, Tzili has been unable to get through the night without medication. The hardest thing is fear. What will happen? The uncertainty is terrible. During the day, she tries to instil hope in the entire family. She doesn’t even try to hide her pain, but it can’t be compared to the pain of her parents. Tzili is determined to spread optimism, fragile as it might be, but optimism nonetheless, a spark of hope. Under no circumstances does she want to give up. The media knows Tzili and is happy to let her take the microphone. She speaks to the world at every opportunity. But above all, Tzili prays in silence, alone before God. She begs Him to ensure that Omer and all the other hostages are released. “Only God can help,” Tzili told me, and she says it very firmly.

Did she take any encouragement from Israeli and world leaders? I don’t get that impression. “Even though the US President was here and spoke nicely, I don’t see any real progress. Weeks have passed—bad weeks. We feel like we’re in hell, and Omer is stuck in hell. But we are not hearing any progress from the government regarding the hostages.” She speaks of full confidence in Israel’s army and hopes that it will be successful in freeing the hostages. But she doesn’t expect anything from the government in Jerusalem.

“We have seen the behaviour of our politicians in recent years. What I see with my eyes does not make us God’s chosen people,” she tells me sadly. “A chosen people is a people who stick together, who live in unity as it was in the Warsaw Ghetto. Everyone was together and helped each other. This is the only way we can defeat evil.”

Prayers

“Some of the readers of *Israel Today* met Tzili at one of our Zoom meetings. When she talked about Omer, you, who



Tzili Wenkert, a Holocaust survivor and the grandmother of Omer Wenkert, who is held hostage by Hamas terrorists in Gaza. | Photo: Flash90



Omer Wenkert in a picture from Hamas

were there, could empathise. I asked her if she wanted to ask you something or tell you something. This was new for them: There are Christians who love the people of Israel, whose hearts are with the Jewish people. She said, “Please pray for my Omer and his family, and pray for all the hostages in Gaza. Only God can help us. We are one big family, made in the image of God.”

Tzili had friends in Romania, Christians, with whom she studied together after the Second World War. She told me about their close, friendly relationship. Tzili also told me how she called her son, Saul, on 7 October, which will go down in history as *Black Shabbat*. At the time, no one knew that Omer had been kidnapped. She wanted to ask how Omer was doing because she knew he was at the Nova music festival with his girlfriend. She promised her son that she would pray immediately. And she has

been doing this non-stop ever since. She can’t do anything more for Omer and his family now.

Pray

As we say goodbye, Tzili shows me a photo of her grandson. I see a beautiful, smiling child full of joy and life. Tzili says quietly: “I look at this picture all the time; I talk to Omer every day.” I tell Tzili: “Close your eyes and use all your senses. It’s really important. God is with us. Surely you feel the warmth of Omer’s body, smell him, feel yourself press a kiss on his cheek and hear his laugh as if he were there.”

Tzili urges me to ask you to pray for her grandson and the other hostages. “Prayers have power,” she insists. I promise Tzili to pass on her request to you all. Indeed, let’s not stop praying for Omer and all those still in captivity.

First published in Israel Today, republished with permission.



Since 7 October, Israelis have had their lives upended—families torn apart, homes destroyed, their sense of security obliterated—with dire psychological, emotional, and financial consequences. As Christians for Israel we want to bring comfort amidst the despair through our emergency fund.

Israel remains in crisis, and families are grappling with unimaginable loss. Many have friends and family serving in the army, and the people of Israel find themselves in a state of tremendous distress. However, amidst the challenges, there is resilience. Now, more than ever, it is crucial to let the people in Israel know that they are not alone and that there are Christians around the world standing in solidarity with them. By visiting and supporting various initiatives aimed at helping the people of Israel, we can bring a ray of hope to those in need.

Danielle Mor of The Jewish Agency expressed gratitude, saying, “Christians for Israel has supported

victims of terror, lone soldiers, shelters for new *olim* (immigrants), food parcels and medicine for poor elderly and Holocaust survivors, and lifesaving equipment for communities in Israel, and renovating shelters. What an impact you have made in Israel, in its harshest hour.”

As the war persists, Christians for Israel remains committed to supporting projects in Israel where it is needed most. Among the initiatives we are actively supporting are:

- **Jewish Agency:** Victims of Terror Fund, safeguarding elderly and new immigrants.
- **ZAKA:** The Israeli organisation that helps identify victims of disasters.
- **Jaffa Institute and Shalva Jerusalem:** Providing shelter to refugees from southern Israel.
- **Christian Friends of Israeli Communities (CFOIC):** Extending assistance to families affected by the conflict.

- **Jerusalem Foundation:** Offering help to the elderly who cannot or dare not go out into the streets.
- **ADI:** Providing extra help for multiple disabled children.
- **Bead Chaim:** Offering additional support for pregnant women who are alone.
- **Hineni humanitarian restaurant:** Providing meals to those in need.
- **Food aid for poor families and elderly:** Ensuring that essential sustenance reaches those who need it most.

Friends from the First Home in the Homeland integration project emphasise the value of your support during these trying times: “When it seems like the entire world is against us, you offer us your hand, your light and your warmth! So, ‘thanks’ is the least thing we can tell you. There are no words to express how we appreciate your support and friendship.”



Assisting evacuees through the Victims of Terror Fund.
| Photo: Jewish Agency for Israel



Activities for children evacuated from Ibim Absorption Center.
| Photo: Jewish Agency for Israel



Children from southern Israel in their temporary kindergarten in Jerusalem's center. | Photo: Jerusalem Foundation



Roger van Oordt (C4I Netherlands) gives welcome packages to teenagers from Kibbutz Karmia at their temporary residence. | Photo: Shalva



Food packages for the elderly.
| Photo: Jewish Agency for Israel

Will You Help?

Your help and support are vital to many in Israel. We provide not only the much-needed resources, but also show our solidarity and love. Extend your hand of support today and stand with Israel in its time of need.

Please use the coupon at the back of this newspaper to donate.
Together we can make a difference.



The Death of a Brave Soldier

■ **Sondra Oster Baras**
International President of CFOIC
Heartland

Everything changed on 7 October. As news started to trickle in regarding the Hamas attack and massacre on that terrible day, we stood awe-struck, horrified. But as a nation well-accustomed to tragedy and war, we instantly mobilised. The IDF drafted 350,000 reserve soldiers, and civilians everywhere enlisted in the effort to help wherever needed—to donate basic supplies to our drafted soldiers, to cook mounds of food for the soldiers who had been drafted before the army could organise food, to pick peppers in the fields that had been abandoned by residents of the bombarded south and evacuated to safer places. Volunteers helped young mothers whose husbands had been suddenly drafted, leaving them alone to cope with their small children, jobs and households. Everyone was there to lend a hand.

Across the oceans, thousands of young Israelis were vacationing when war broke out. Some were young men who had recently completed their compulsory military service, travelling the world before settling down to study or work. One of those Israelis was my nephew, Amichai Oster. He had finished his regular army service in November 2022 and shortly after set out for Southeast Asia. He trekked in Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, enjoying the beautiful scenery and meeting new people everywhere he went. Some months into his trip, he met a friend of a friend of mine, a Jewish man from the US. They got to talking, and the American was so impressed with Amichai, with his faith, his wonderful kindness and his devotion to his people, his land and to God. I received this message via my friend to convey to the family: “Amichai is a walking Sanctification of God’s name.” We were all so proud of Amichai.

Amichai returned home for a few weeks in June and then took off again for more travels, this time to North America. Beginning in Florida, where he bought an old police cruiser, he drove the length and breadth of the US, then headed north into the Canadian Rockies. He



was on his way to California, in Salt Lake City, when the war broke out. He didn’t think twice. He made his way to California but not to sight-see. He got on the first plane available, together with hundreds of other Israeli young men and women coming home to fight.

Amichai joined his reserve unit for the first time since he had only recently completed his regular army service.

The young men there were all new to him, but within days, he became a vital member of the team. He was a valuable fighter, an expert in the MAG gun, and he was admired by all for his military prowess. But more than that—he was loved. With his guitar strung along his back, whenever there was a break, he pulled out his instrument, and everyone sang. He led Sabbath prayers for anyone interested, and they all joined in—the singing moved them all.

Ever since the ground incursion began some months ago, we have woken up nearly every morning to the list of soldiers who have lost their lives in battle the day before. The IDF spokesperson’s announcement always begins the same way: it is now permitted to announce the death of... Each day, we scan that list for names we know. And nearly every day, we feel a connection to someone.

Israel is a small country, and there are virtually no degrees of separation between us. When we see the name of a fallen soldier, we learn of his army unit and where he lived in Israel. Ultimately, we know someone with the same family name—are they related? We know



someone from the same town—are they neighbours? And sometimes we actually know the young man who has fallen or know his family well. I have friends who have lost grandchildren. I have friends who have lost neighbours and friends. I have neighbours who have lost children and husbands. With two sons and a son-in-law and several nephews called up on active duty, including one son fighting in Gaza, we always know that there but for the grace of God.

On 1 January, New Year’s Day, the angel of death knocked on my family’s door. My nephew Amichai was killed in action in Gaza as terrorists detonated an explosive device from a hidden shaft. Amichai was the only soldier killed that day, but eleven of his fellow soldiers were wounded. We are a large and cohesive family—my sisters, my brother, and I all live in the same town of Karnei Shomron, in Samaria and we raised our many children together. Amichai is my brother’s son. We are all grieving, each in our own way, but we cannot imagine the depth of the grief and sorrow that my brother and his immediate family are feeling right now. It is incomprehensible.

Amichai was buried the following day in the Karnei Shomron military cemetery, located in the beautiful Kana River Valley (*Joshua 17*), where Amichai so loved to hike. Thousands came to the funeral and, throughout the week of mourning, flooded my brother’s house with visits, often bearing food parcels.

A couple we did not know came from the US. They had just landed in Israel to visit with family, heard about Amichai’s death



Amichai Oster, killed in action 1 January 2024

and felt compelled to make a condolence call. It turns out they had met Amichai on his travels and remembered his kind face and gracious manner. Soldiers, including Amichai’s wounded friends, came to share their experiences with the family, some arriving in wheelchairs and on crutches. Major supermarket chains and banks sent boxes of food and drink as a small token of their appreciation for Amichai’s heroism and for the heroism of all our soldiers.

A number of political leaders visited as well, including Benny Gantz, a former chief of staff of the IDF and currently a senior member of the small war cabinet. A number of soldiers were present during his visit, and they echoed to him the message that had been repeated all that week by mourners and visitors alike—the war must continue. We must defeat Hamas. The deaths of these great heroes must not have been in vain. We must remove this terrible threat to Israel and to the world from our midst.

Please join me in prayer for my brother and sister-in-law and their children, that God may give them comfort in their time of grief. Please join me in prayer for my nation that we may continue to find the strength we need to keep going during these difficult hours. Please join me in prayer for the safety and security of the nation of Israel.

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

Experiencing God's Blessing—Part 5

■ Keith Buxton

Former National Director |
Bridges for Peace Australia

This is my fifth and last article sharing some thoughts from the *Torah* portion, or *parsha*, named *Ekev*—*Deuteronomy* 7:12–11:25—in which we read how Moses encourages the Israelites who are about to cross the Jordan into the Promised Land to put their trust wholeheartedly in God, and to discover how He will abundantly bless them if they faithfully listen to and obey Him.

We see for example in *Deuteronomy* 8:8–10 the Lord's desire to pour out blessing upon His people, including the promise of rich agricultural blessing in the land: "A land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and [date] honey"—the well-known seven species.

We have however been discovering that their experience of these many promised blessings is dependent upon a number of important conditions—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.

Throughout the Scriptures our good God whose heart is always to bless His people is revealed as a God of incredible patience, compassion, love, faithfulness, mercy, forgiveness and grace. Hear echoes of *Micah* 6:8 as you hear now the words of the Lord to His people in *Deuteronomy* 10:12–15:

"And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good?"

"Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the Lord your God, also the earth with all that is in it. The Lord delighted only in your fathers, to love them; and He chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as it is this day."

This is the loving God who, as Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks reminds us, calls His people to listen. We read the opening words of this *Torah* portion: "Then it shall come to pass, because you listen to these judgments, 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."

Rabbi Sacks goes on to say: "These words with which our *parsha* begins contain the verb *sh-m-a*. It occurred in last week's *parsha* in the most famous line of the whole of Judaism, *Shema*

Yisrael.

"One of the most striking facts about the *Torah* is that, although it contains 613 commands, it does not contain a word that means 'to obey.' The verb used by the *Torah* in place of 'to obey' is *sh-m-a*."

We should at this point note that *sh-m-a* conveys a variety of meanings, including to hear, to listen, to heed, to pay attention to, to understand, and to be willing to obey.

"This [says Rabbi Sacks] is of the highest possible significance. It means that blind obedience is not a virtue in Judaism. God wants us to understand the laws He has commanded us. He wants us to reflect on why this law, not that. He wants us to listen, to reflect, to seek to understand, to internalise and to respond. He wants us to become a listening people."

"If we want God to listen to us we have to be prepared to listen to Him. And if we learn to listen to Him, then we eventually learn to listen to our fellow humans: the silent cry of the lonely, the poor, the weak, the vulnerable, the people in existential pain."

What does this mean, then, for Israel on the brink of entering the Promised Land? What does it mean for you and me? It means this. The God who loves us and cares about us, the God who watches over us and seeks only His best for us, calls us to so listen to and internalise His commandments and His ways that we desire to—and choose to—love our neighbour and the stranger among us, and engage in acts of kindness and compassion, helping to build a society based on love.

The apostle John gave expression to this truth in *1 John* 3:17–18: "But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth."

Deuteronomy 10:17–19 puts it this way: "For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe. He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."

As Rabbi Jonathan Sacks puts it, "God created the world in love and forgiveness and asks us to love and forgive others." That is the kind of obedience that pleases God. And my prayer for all those reading this is that we may have an uncompromising desire to please God in all things.



The Seven Species—two grains and five fruits—listed in *Deuteronomy* 8:8 as special agricultural products of the Promised Land. | Photo: www.gardenindelight.com

The reality that we have been seeking to understand is that we can only truly reflect the character of our God, and please Him, and experience His abundant blessings, if we hold fast to the Word of God, display true humility, and demonstrate obedience to our Lord.

Our *Torah* portion is named *Ekev*, a word from the first verse *Deuteronomy* 7:12, for the Israelites are told that "because (*ekev*)" or "if" they listen to, keep and do God's commandments, the Lord will bless and care for them. God desires that we keep His words constantly in our minds and in our hearts, as we read in *Deuteronomy* 11:18–21:

"Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up."

"And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth."

My wife and I moved over eight years ago into a new home on the beautiful Sunshine Coast in Queensland. One of the things that we did the day we moved was to affix a *mezuzah* (pictured right) on the right doorpost of the front door, as a reminder of God's presence with us, and of all that He requires of us.

The *mezuzah* contains biblical expressions of our love and respect for God and His commandments, as found in this *Deuteronomy* 11 passage and the

important and foundational *Shema Yisrael* verses in *Deuteronomy* 6:4–9:

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

May we all be reminded—one way or another—that God knows what is best for us. He has communicated His heart and His instructions for godly living in His Word. May we live daily in humble dependence upon Him, and in loving obedience to Him bless others with the kindness and compassion that He shows to us.

Keith Buxton is an ordained pastor. He currently serves on the Christians for Israel (C4I) Australia management committee and is a liaison with C4I Oceania Island affiliates.



Imputing the Crime of Cain to Abel

■ Andrew Tucker

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

Late December 2023, South Africa brought proceedings in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) under the Genocide Convention, claiming that Israel is a racist apartheid entity that is trying to eliminate the Palestinians (and has been doing so ever since 1948) and the only way to deal with this is to order Israel to bring an immediate and complete end to the conflict in Gaza.

Israel argues it is Hamas, not Israel, that has a genocidal intention and that Israel is a legitimate state based on the rule of law, fighting a justified war against Hamas, not the Palestinian people. While the number of deaths and extent of destruction in Gaza is high, this is an unhappy but inevitable consequence of the war that Hamas started and Israel never wanted.

On 26 January 2024, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) decided that it is 'plausible' that Israel is committing genocide of the Palestinian people. The Court acknowledged that on 7 October, "Hamas and other armed groups present in the Gaza Strip carried out an attack in Israel, killing more than 1,200 persons, injuring thousands and abducting some 240 people, many of whom continue to be held hostage", and at the end of its judgment demanded the release of the hostages. But the Court at no point made any reference to Hamas' ongoing use of force against Israel and its genocidal campaign to eliminate the Jewish people.

The Israeli-nominated judge ad hoc Aharon Barak was highly critical of the Court's approach, accusing the Court of "imputing the crime of Cain to Abel".

Constructive Ambiguity

The Court's 25-page judgment is a prime example of "constructive ambiguity"—a technique (usually ascribed to Henry Kissinger) employed to disguise an inability to resolve a contentious issue on which the parties remain far apart and to do so in a manner that enables each to claim to obtain some concession on it.

The Court expressed strong criticism of Israel's use of force in Gaza and of the statements made by a number of Israeli leaders that appeared to promote large-scale destruction and killing of Palestinians in Gaza in response to the attacks of 7 October. But it said it cannot (and should not) at this stage decide that Israel is committing genocide. Accordingly, the Court did not grant the extreme measure of a cease-fire that South Africa had demanded.

Nevertheless, it ordered Israel to "make sure it does not commit genocide". Israel, of course, considers that it has no intention to destroy the Palestinian people and thus is not committing genocide.

Dodging the difficult question of whether genocide is being committed, the Court called on Israel to "take immediate and effective measures to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to address the adverse conditions of life faced by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip". This is basically an obligation Israel already has under international humanitarian law.

The ICJ expressed its "deep concern" about the situation of the hostages and "calls for their immediate and unconditional release". But while these are nice words, they are totally ineffective as Hamas is not a party to these proceedings.

Judge Aharon Barak

In his powerful dissenting opinion, Israeli Judge ad hoc Aharon Barak stated that this is, in effect, "to impute the crime of Cain to Abel". This is a reference to *Genesis 4*, where Cain murders his brother Abel in jealousy.

Barak was one of only two of the seventeen judges who opposed the majority's decision. (The other was Ugandan judge Julia Sebutinde, who opined that South Africa's claims are groundless and the case should be dismissed).

Barak emphasised that the Genocide Convention was established on the ashes of the Holocaust. It created a new international crime—the "crime of crimes", the most horrendous crime in existence. The Jewish people know better than any other people what genocide is, and the State of Israel was established to ensure that genocide never happens again.

Genocide is the killing members of a group with the intention of destroying that group. At the heart of the concept tent to destroy (eliminate) the group as such. Absent such intention there may be widespread destruction constituting a violation of international humanitarian law or criminal law, but there can be no genocide.

Barak explained that he himself experienced the full force of Nazi attempt at genocide. He was born in Kaunas, Lithuania, and miraculously survived the Nazi onslaught. Only 5% of the Jews of Lithuania survived.

Evidence of Genocide?

According to Barak, the Court's decision that it is "plausible" that Israel intends to destroy not just Hamas but the



Public hearings at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the case South Africa v. Israel, 11-12 January 2024, at the Peace Palace in The Hague, the seat of the Court. | Photo: International Court of Justice

Palestinians as such is most problematic. The Court based this conclusion on the combination of massive number of casualties and extent of destruction, the fact that Israel was aware that its campaign would cause a humanitarian crisis, and a number of select statements by Israeli leaders shortly after 7 October.

But that takes the statements of Israeli leaders out of context, places huge reliance on dubious information provided by Hamas, and flies in the face of all the evidence provided by Israel that Israel is trying in every possible way to minimise civilian casualties. It ignores the fact that this is a highly complex and difficult urban war, in which Hamas has a deliberate strategy of embedding its combatants in civilian places like schools, mosques and hospitals.

Inexplicably, the Court virtually ignored that huge amount of evidence that Israel had provided to the Court of its efforts to minimise civilian casualties, and of Hamas' strategy of maximising civilian casualties.

By stating that it is "plausible" that Israel is committing genocide, the Court is allowing international law to be politicised. South Africa clearly used the Genocide Convention to advance the Palestinians' political cause, and to support the campaign of Hamas.

It is no secret that the ANC has close ties with Hamas and the Palestinian Authority. Evidence has even emerged that Iran was involved and maybe even financed this case in The Hague.

The Court also relied heavily on evidence provided by UNRWA, the Palestinian refugee organisation. However, UNRWA is far from neutral in this matter. In recent days, a lot of evidence is emerging that UNRWA is heavily infiltrated by Hamas. According to the Wall Street Journal, 10 per cent of

UNRWA's 12,000 employees are affiliated with Hamas.

Perhaps more importantly, South Africa's selective and politicised weaponisation of the Genocide Convention against Israel is diverting the attention of the world from the fact the genocidal campaign launched by Iran, and implemented through its proxies including Hamas (Gaza and West Bank) and Hezbollah (in Lebanon), to eliminate the Jewish people in Palestine.

Hamas is a proxy of Iran, and shares Iran's intent to eliminate the Jewish people in Palestine. As its 1988 Charter shows, it is an Islamist movement committed to the use of violence in order to "obliterate Israel" and "raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine". For Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other similar Islamist groups, the mere existence of the State of Israel is seen as an obstacle to the reign and rule of Allah.

Consequences of the Decision

The "constructive ambiguity" approach avoids making a clear decision based on the merits of the case. Ad hoc Judge Barak shows that the evidence presented to the Court simply did not provide a basis for concluding that it is plausible that Israel is committing genocide. The Court simply should have recognised this and dismissed South Africa's claims.

By giving credibility to South Africa's politically driven claims, the Court is allowing the law to be politicised.

All of this degrades the authority of the Court, and the integrity of the legal system. And it undermines the rights of sovereign states to defend their citizens against terror.

The Things We Get Used To

■ Tal Hartuv

Israeli Tour Guide | Author | Cartoonist

Whether it be moving house, changing jobs, or adjusting to a new family situation, getting used to new situations shows that we are resilient creatures. Our ability to adapt is often for our benefit, but getting used to things can also be to our detriment.

Let's say we wake up one day with a dull pain somewhere. Its uncomfortable, but we shake it off. It doesn't feel that serious and it's too much trouble to go to the doctor—because we are busy—so we buckle up and learn to live with it. Time passes and as it does, we adjust to the nagging and growing pain. Finally, when we can stand it no longer, we go to the doctor for tests. The news is grim. Neglect has caused that nagging pain to turn into a deadly tumor.

When it comes to Israel, the world has one of those deadly tumors. That cancerous growth—otherwise known as antisemitism—has been, at best ignored, met with indifference, and at worse has become not only acceptable, but has bulged and swelled so much that even the most indifferent cannot help but notice the growth. And where we are today, one has to wonder, if this untamed tumor, is a deadly blow to civilization.

"The previous years of getting used to antisemitism, have now erupted in outbursts of savagery worldwide"

Ever since October 7th, the previous years of getting used to antisemitism, have now erupted in outbursts of savagery worldwide. Through the streets of Paris, London, New York and other civilized cities, thugs surge through the roads destroying property, harassing opponents and mocking the helpless police—all in the name of Palestine, their favorite fictitious perpetual victim and calling for the death of the Jewish people.

Antisemitism and Israel-hatred didn't start with this thuggery. Like a tumor, it started with the unnoticeable, was ignored, was got used to, and now things have spun out of control.

To our detriment, Israel has also got used to things. For years we have put up with the abnormal and we have told ourselves it is normal. For example, Israel is the only country in the world that has an official government ministry that deals with "Hasbara." This word comes from the word "to explain." Explain what exactly, one may innocently ask. "Explain our right to defend ourselves" comes back the staggering reply.

It is mind-boggling that only seven decades after the Holocaust, Jewish

people, in an official and non-official capacity, have to engage in "hasbara." Twitter, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, Instagram and LinkedIn, as well as mainstream media, are flooded with Israelis doing their best to "explain," that just like any other ethnic minority or sovereign state, Israel and the Jewish people also have a right to exist.

"Hasbara" is so part of the fabric here, that no one even questions it anymore. This need to justify our existence has sunk so deep into the Israeli mindset that explaining to the world that we also have a right to life, is as normal as having WIFI. Hasbara is part of life. It's part and parcel of being Jewish, so we tell ourselves. Just as a world without WIFI is unimaginable, so is the idea of living one day in Israel without Hasbara.

Yet this idea of Israel, a sovereign country, explaining our right to exist, hypocritically—only pertains to Israel. When Russia brutally invaded the Ukraine, the West was rightly horrified. Not wanting to become involved in the conflict for fears of things escalating to another world war, the Western nations unreservedly sided with Ukraine by arming them and executing certain sanctions against Russia. Charities in Europe raised money for the war-torn

Ukraine, and millions touchingly opened up their homes to Ukrainian refugees. The latest round in that war, has gone on for nearly 2 years, and support has never waned. In all that time, not once has Ukraine been made to feel that they have a limited time to respond to the Russian aggression before popular opinion turns against them. Not once have hundreds of thousands of people marched through European streets frenziedly calling to liberate Russia from Ukrainian aggression, or calling for the genocide of the invaded.

Yet with Israel, it is different. In Israel, following every single act of aggression by the Palestinians, and no matter how brutal, we have got used to what is known in Hebrew-speak, as a "window of opportunity." This window is a time slot, where the world allows itself a slither of sympathy to make themselves feel moral and pure, before turning on Israel by reversing the roles of aggressor and victim.

Initially the world was horrified at the murder of 1,200 Israelis and over 200 swept into captivity. But it was a horror which lasted a handful of days: at best.



Protesters gathered in New York City to protest against Israel on October, 9th 2023. | Photo: Shutterstock

While we were still collecting body parts, and human ashes from our corn fields, changing sides was in full gear. Outrage, hatred, calls for Jews to be pushed into the sea became the norm in the streets of western civilization. Those calls have turned into violence. Jewish people in Europe and North America are verbally and physically attacked, and posters of the likes of those who have been raped and dragged off into Gaza are torn down in a fit of fake moral outrage. It is to Israel's detriment that we got used to the idea throughout the years that no matter how brutal the attack, we only have a "window of opportunity" to respond. To acclimatize to the moral distortion helps to getting used to the fact that no matter what we do, we will always be hated. It is time to assert the, "We don't care what the world thinks anymore. We will do as is best for us."

Both Israel and the nations have got used to the slogan that "Zionism is racism," first passed in the United Nations way back in 1975. It was unfathomable that the free world would think as much just 25 years after the Holocaust. That resolution opened the sewers, and ever since there have been more resolutions passed against Israel, more than any other nation on earth.

The UN was supposed to be a bastion of "fairness and equality," yet has spewed out hatred against the Jewish people. The irony is that just a stone's throw from the UN building in New York, is the statue of its inauguration inspired by a verse from the Jewish prophet Isaiah. Getting used to this hatred, has enabled antisemitism to drip down into other political platforms as well as an endless stream of "human rights" organizations and universities. Getting used to it has seen to it, that of late, these organizations have cast doubt on the

rape of Jewish women, and if yes they are to be believed, then it is all and only about "context."

Israel has got used to terminology which dictates the mindsets of the ignorant masses. Instead of being embraced as part of Biblical Israel, "Settlements" is a pejorative. They have been absorbed into consciousness as being extraneous from Israel. Those who live in them are not commended for efforts at coexistence, but rather viewed as nothing but violent thugs.

For the last 2000 years, Christianity in the West has also got used to things. Always responsible for the death of Jesus, for hundreds of years the Jewish people have been blamed and shunned and purged. Someone needs to take the place of God's "former chosen faulty people" and hey presto! Here comes the church...

The church got used to this replacement theology advocated by the Church Fathers. Marcion proposed that Jesus was a warm and snuggly god—unlike the vengeful nasty one of the Jews, and Israel, instead of being viewed as a physical entity and homeland of the Jewish people, is a spiritual state of being reserved for Christians, a feel-good factor. But getting used to that, didn't stop there. Engaging in cultural identity theft, the Jewish historical Jesus morphed over the years into a blonde man who moves around the hills of Galilee in a white dress, looking distinctly Swedish.

In a world swarming with hatred against the Jews, that cosy idea of a fictitious Jesus could not last. Absurdly and chillingly, it has now been dished for an Arab Palestinian Jesus, donning a Kafiya and a Kalashnikov hell-bent on destroying the Jewish people, and all who align with them.

International Holocaust Remembrance Day, 7 October and the Death of Delusion

■ Perry Trotter

Founder | Holocaust & Antisemitism Foundation
| New Zealand

Once again, UN International Holocaust Remembrance Day has come and gone. As has been done since 2005, when the UN designated 27 January for this purpose, Jewish people and their supporters (both real and imagined) have gathered around the world to mark the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp. Once again, attendees have listened attentively to speeches from dignitaries that range from the most worthy, authentic and heartfelt, to politically correct, universalised platitudes that, by denying the Jewish particularity of this pivotal event, honour neither those who perished nor those still living.

Every crisis has a way of cutting through confusion with urgent clarity. The events of 7 October may have forever changed Holocaust memorialisation and thinking around antisemitism. The full implications of Hamas barbarism are yet to be fully realised, but the damage done to many dearly held delusions is already apparent.

7 October has branded all such readings of *Never Again* as delusional.

The UN designation of an official memorial day has always held a harsh dissonance for many of those who understand antisemitism and the UN. A body which, in practical terms, has been a notable purveyor of global antisemitism would hardly seem an appropriate organisation to host a Holocaust memorial event. But post 7 Oct., what was merely a dissonance might now be better characterised as a siren scream. Recent revelations that UN staff (more specifically, employees of UNRWA—a body that until very recently NZ continued to fund) took part in the events of 7 Oct. will be shocking only to those who have not followed the UN and its appalling record of anti-Israel resolutions. The delusion that the UN, by designating an annual commemoration, was signalling an intention to act unequivocally against antisemitism has been well and truly shattered. Unsurprisingly, certain Jewish thinkers object to the UN's continuing association with what is, for them, a sacred commemoration.

Never Again?

Never Again means different things to different people. For many, it speaks of Jewish self-reliance and the strength and preparedness of the IDF to prevent another Jewish genocide. For others, it may be shorthand for the conviction that the civilised West would not again stand by and allow the Jewish people to be subject to systematic annihilation. A minority may have expressed a belief that the intention of the Holocaust, the eradication of Jews and all things Jewish *everywhere*, died along with the few Nazi leaders brought to justice on Nuremberg gallows.

7 October has branded all such readings of *Never Again* as delusional.

For reasons yet to be fully revealed, IDF security systems failed on a cataclysmic scale. Israel's



Candles in honour of the six million Jews killed in the Holocaust light up the Old City Walls in Jerusalem. | Photo: Flash90

overconfidence in its military apparatus and its leaders has taken a severe blow.

Also rendered delusional was any notion that the civilised West really learned anything from the Holocaust and that it would not again stand by and allow the Jewish people to be subject to existential threats. Notwithstanding initial strong statements and actions of support from major Western nations, Israel's legitimate determination to destroy Hamas is now encountering increasingly strong opposition from the same quarters. Leftists and Islamists flood the streets of those same nations, chanting with impunity. "*From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free*" (shamefully, several of NZ's own Members of Parliament can be counted among the chanters). If there were ever a plausible appeal to ignorance as to the necessary implication of such a call, 7 Oct. rendered it utterly obsolete. It is a call to genocide, and 7 Oct. provided a chilling demonstration of the phrase's practical application.

The Nazis, with their death factories and disciplined devotion to Jewish destruction, came to symbolise and personify ultimate evil. Nothing worse could be imagined until now. Hamas's depravity plumbed new depths and vanquished any residual hope in the inherent goodness of man. If many Nazi officers considered the day-after-day killing of Jewish children difficult but necessary, such that drunkenness in the evenings provided a means of relief, for Hamas, such actions (and much, much worse) were relished and celebrated. Thus the Nazis' status as the gold standard of ultimate evil, never to be surpassed, has also proven to have been a delusion.

One delusion to have survived 7 Oct., however, is that held by many of Israel's friends. Six former Australian PMs, in a 30 October statement that to its credit described as "legitimate" the objective of defeating Hamas, also included this pearl: "We endorse, as we did in office, the Australian Government's enduring support for a two-state solution..." Remarkable. Despite Hamas' and the Palestinian Authority's own explicit rejection of

such a 'solution', enlightened western leaders continue to signal their intention to pressure Israel into yet another unworkable, dangerous and unjust compromise. Ultimately, deluded friends may prove to be more dangerous than clear-minded enemies.

The Oslo Accords, a.k.a. 'the peace process', has proven itself to have been a thirty-year exercise in national self-harm. Of course, many will strongly disagree, but of them, it must be asked, "What has the process achieved for Israel other than a weakened strategic position and innumerable terror victims?" Certainly, among Israelis, many who formerly supported 'the process' have almost overnight been shaken free from the delusion that their 'peace partners' have even the slightest interest in peace.

Arguably, a great delusion that should have died with the events surrounding October 7 is the view that Jew-hatred can be adequately explained *without* reference to the supernatural.

A shadow proves the existence of light. And the recognition of great evil proves the existence of transcendent goodness. How else could evil be seen to be truly, objectively evil?

Many leaders within Christendom, by maintaining their silence after October 7 merely demonstrated their own irrelevance. In a perverse irony, Hamas strategists demonstrated their grip on spiritual realities by dubbing their October assault *Operation Al-Aqsa Flood*. Al-Aqsa is a mosque atop Jerusalem's Temple Mount. Thus, these Islamic terrorists and the spiritual forces by which they are energised apparently understand something that many Christian leaders do not. This phase of human history climaxes in the controversy over Zion. Ultimately, it is a controversy that embroils the entire world, Israel's people, her land, her city, and finally, her King.

Perry has photographed seventy Holocaust survivors and has created Holocaust exhibitions shown throughout New Zealand. Portions of his work have also been displayed in Australia, Berlin and Dubai.

Perry is also the author of "Israel in the Biblical Worldview", available on Amazon.

Recommended Viewing

“One Life” by Joanna Moss

The beloved story of Sir Nicholas (Nicky) Winton of Kindertransport fame is depicted in the latest movie *One Life*. The title draws on the Jewish *Talmudic* saying that saving one life is like saving the whole world, but the meaning would be lost on most people, especially in 2024. Whilst the expression got a cursory mention in the trailer and film, it is not the most interesting part. Nor is the title fitting for a man of such noble exploits with more than 670 children saved. It would have been better to have used the title of his daughter’s book that the film is drawn from and demonstrably illustrated, *If it’s not Impossible... The Life of Sir Nicholas Winton* by Barbara Winton.

When the movie possibility arose, Barbara Winton insisted that Sir Anthony Hopkins play the lead role of an old man still tortured by the guilt of not saving more children from war-torn Prague. It was certainly a challenging role to play a person born in 1909 who lived through both wars. Winton’s son agreed it was authentic. Helena Bonham Carter plays Winton’s mother, a German Jewish immigrant and a force to be reckoned with. The impact of his heritage on his decision to save the children; both the moral duty as an immigrant’s son and a Jewish person to kin, are not explored deeply. Nor is the role of his heritage or class in his Britishness. But we see that he was raised Anglican and was caught between the two faiths. His family changed their name from Wertheim to Winton just before the Second World War based on discrimination.

In the second time period (1988 ff) we see Winton as a retired stockbroker filling his days with community projects amidst a sea of files with a precious scrapbook encased in an old briefcase. He probably retired around the time of deregulation being old school in Thatcher’s New Britain. He exemplifies noblesse oblige, but the sadness is pervasive.

As for life lessons, Winton’s life reminds us that we need to “cast all our cares on Jesus” and that God is in the business of redemption. He saw the load Winton was carrying and He used the most unlikely thing—reality TV, to bring about a resolution and it happened in stages. The God of the impossible uses our heritage, situation and skills for good. But we have a choice. From there we see Winton dealing with the past and the principle of sowing and reaping in Nicky’s kids. There was resolution for them too. Incredibly, he lived to 106 to demonstrate God’s blessing of a long life.

Aliyah from Ukraine continues
“Your Prayers are Really Needed”

Koen Carlier
Christians for Israel Ukraine

We regularly get the question: “What can we pray for?” Then our answer is always: “Pray for protection for our drivers!” Our main job here is to drive, drive and drive. Thousands of kilometres a month in this war-torn country!

From all over Ukraine, we pick up people going to Israel, which is not always without danger because of the war and the winter time. An average drive to and from Kishenov (the capital of Moldova) from Ukraine takes two to three days—including overnight stays. Because of constant drone and missile attacks and due to heavy debris flying around from such an attack, vehicles are often times heavily damaged (see the photo below). We are grateful this is not our mini-bus. While the material is replaceable, human life is not.



A frequently seen image: a vehicle completely destroyed by flying debris from a rocket impact. | Photo: C4I

Uncertain Future

The war has been ongoing for almost two years now, and unfortunately, the end is not yet in sight. Many people feel depressed and exhausted! Will there be a new mobilisation in Ukraine? If Ukraine wants to endure, there will be no other choice. Most of the Jews that we help leave for Israel are children under eighteen years old, women and those over sixty. Men between the ages of eighteen and sixty can only leave the

country with a valid official reason, such as accompanying a seriously ill relative.

Busy Time Ahead

The first week of January was quiet, but now we are busy bringing Jews to Kishenov in small groups from cities such as Kharkiv, Dnipro, Kiev, and Zaporozhye. In the coming months, hundreds of Ukrainian Jews will leave for Israel permanently.



Among those who left for Israel was the almost 91-year-old Yevdokiya (pictured above) from Zhitomir. She left with her daughter Rita, who worked for the Jewish Agency for many years. Her son remained behind because of the mobilisation law and could be called up at any moment. It was not an easy trip for Yevdokiya, also because of her age.

Another person that we took to Kishenov was Alexander, who accompanied his sick mother. Alexander worked in a kosher store in Dnipro for many years. His wife and daughter had fled at the beginning of the war and now live in Beer Sheva. It will be a special and emotional reunion after almost two years!

Obstacles Included

Every week there is a flight with Jews flying from Kishenov to Tel Aviv. The *Aliyah* (return) continues despite everything. We continue to provide practical help, obstacles included! As *Isaiah 62:10* says: “Pass through, pass through the gates! Prepare the way for the people. Build up, build up the highway! Remove the stones. Raise a banner for the nations.”

Please support Jews from Ukraine in making aliyah to Israel. It costs € 135 | US \$150 to help one person to return.

A Special Visit to Nikolayev

Anemone Rüger
Project Coordinator | Holocaust Survivors Ukraine

“It’s been too long, more than two years since we last visited people in Nikolayev,” said Alina as she got ready to go visit Holocaust survivors and Jewish elderly in C4I’s sponsorship programme with driver Igor. Since the war in Ukraine began, access to the city has been very limited. Nikolayev is located on the Black Sea, right between Odessa to the west and Kherson to the east. The farther east one goes, the more dangerous it gets. For the past two years, the elderly have been visited by Yelena, a local resident and courageous member of the Jewish community who has turned down many offers by friends from abroad to move to safer places. But now, Ukraine’s C4I felt it was time to bring some help and hope and check on the survivors personally. “You see many destroyed buildings as you drive through town; many houses without windows,” Alina shared. “It’s very depressing; I don’t know how people live there. We drove by the hotel where we had stayed before, and it was a ruin.” One of the elderly, 86-year-old Serafima, was nearly the only one left in a 30-family apartment building after heavy aerial bombing. “She was so sweet, so happy we came and broke up her loneliness,” said Alina. “Her window had been replaced after it

was blown out in an attack. She looks out on a destroyed building across the street and a tank under her window. Yet, she doesn’t want to leave her familiar home. She wears a fur hat because it’s cold in her apartment. We brought her a generous food parcel. She was radiant; our visit meant the world to her!”



(Left) Serafima, 86 years old. (Right) C4I Ukraine's Alina reads our card to one of the people she visited: “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you...” (*Isaiah 43*). | Photos: Christians for Israel Ukraine

Believing Without Israel

Grafted into the Noble Olive Tree—Part 9



Old olive trees. | Photo: Shutterstock

■ **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.

Paul explains in *Romans 11* that as Christians from the nations, we have been grafted as ‘wild branches’ onto the trunk of the noble olive. In contrast, some of the natural branches have been broken off from the tree. Paul explains that some Jews were broken off because of their unbelief, and we, as Christians from the nations, were grafted onto the olive tree. Within replacement and enlargement theology, this has often been explained to indicate that the trunk is ‘Israel’, that most of the Jews have been removed from it, and we have been incorporated into it. So, together with Messianic Jews, we, as Christians, would effectively have become the new Israel. This is a curious way of reading it. First of all, not all the Jews were taken away from the olive tree, but only ‘some’. Later in the same chapter, the prophetic promise is declared: “And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written, The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob” (*Romans 11:26*). So God has not at all finished with Israel and the Jewish people, nor have they been replaced by the church. Israel, as the ‘natural branches’, stands on the noble olive tree, representing God’s eternal covenants with Abraham and his descendants. We, as Christians from the Gentiles, through faith in Jesus Christ,

the Messiah, are grafted onto that same trunk by His grace as ‘wild branches’. We do not thereby become equal to Israel, nor do we replace Israel, but we may share in the blessings, the ‘rich root of the olive tree’ (*verse 17*) of God’s new covenant with Israel. When the covenant was established, God promised Abram: “In you, all the families of the earth will be blessed” (*Genesis 12:3*). So Israel is not replaced, however it means to share in the blessings of the covenant with Abraham.

The Unjust Tenants
In *Matthew 21*, Jesus tells a parable about a landowner who has a vineyard and rents it out to tenants. However, the tenants want to keep the produce for themselves.

“For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel”. *Isaiah 5:7*

Eventually, the landowner sends his own son to the tenants on the assumption that they will spare him. But the tenants kill the son, assuming that they will inherit the vineyard when the heir is dead. When Jesus then asks the chief priests and elders of the people what the landowner will do with these tenants, they reply that he will make the tenants die an evil death. Jesus then replies, “That the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing the fruit of it” (*Matthew 21:43*).
This passage has often been interpreted to suggest that the kingdom was taken from Israel because the Jews killed the son of the lord of the house. God would have taken away Israel’s Kingdom and

the people of God and handed it over to other people who were willing to bring forth the fruit. Those other people were supposedly the Christian church. That is the doctrine as we have known it since the Middle Ages. Again, this interpretation is an example of insertionism. Governed by the persistent perception that Israel’s role as God’s people is finished, such passages are read carelessly. What does it actually say? Israel, in this parable, is the vineyard. We encounter that image more often in the Old Testament. *Isaiah 5:7* says: “For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel.”
The tenants in the parable are the leaders of Israel. Jesus is speaking at that moment to the priests and elders of the

Biblical Roots
By David Nekrutman

Resurrecting Psalm 23

It is time to resurrect *Psalm 23*. To do so, we need to observe that the correct Hebrew title for the book of Psalms is ‘Praises’—*Tehillim*. The book of *Psalms* tells us how to view a life with God when we worship Him. No matter our situation in life, a believer must end up praising God.
Psalms records the highs and lows of multiple authors as well as the demands and expectations they put to God to rescue themselves and His people. Yet, each chapter is ultimately a praise to Him. Instead of viewing chapter 23 as a ‘psalm’, let’s view it from the perspective of ‘praise’.
The end of the first verse of *Psalm 23* is usually translated as “I shall not want.” These four English words are represented by two Hebrew words—*לֹא אֶחְסָר* (*loh ekh-sar*). Although the opening of verse 1 is the present tense —“The Eternal is My Shepherd,” it concludes in the future tense. If we follow the rules of grammar, the end of verse 1 should be “I have everything.” What’s this future all about? The revelational answer comes down to one letter—*alef* (א).
Let me demonstrate. The first letter of the Hebrew alphabet is *alef* (א) and it has a numerical value of 1. It is the letter that begins the word of the verse *Psalm 23:1* *אֶחְסָר* (*ekh-sar*).
The *alef* is constructed from two other Hebrew letters *yud* (י) and *vav* (ו). The numerical value of *yud* is 10 and the numerical value of *vav* is 6. If you look at the *alef* closely, there are two *yud*’s and one *vav*. By combining these two letters that form *alef*, the total numerical value of the word is 26.
The name of God that begins *Psalm 23:1* is the *Tetragrammaton*, *יהוה* (יהוה), translated as ‘The Eternal,’ since the term is a fusion of three Hebrew time-related expressions, future, present and past. God above time! The numerical value of the *Tetragrammaton* is 26 (*yud* -10; *hey* -5; *vav* -6 and *hey* 5). The *alef* that begins the last word of the verse is hinting to the name of God at the beginning of the verse. *Alef* equals the *Tetragrammaton*.
A Hebrew translation of *Psalm 23:1* would thus be “A melody to David: The Eternal is shepherding me, I will not miss anything.”
The reason I will not miss anything is because of the *alef* that represents The Eternal. When I am all in with Him, I will always have it all.
So, instead of just reciting this verse at a funeral, it is time for the Praise to be part of our living with God!

Comfort, Comfort my People

■ **Johannes Gerloff**
Theologian, Journalist, Lecturer & Author

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

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

We continue our study of *Romans 9-11*. In chapter 10, Paul talks about the message of the Gentiles to Israel. The message we Gentiles should bring is a good message and a message of comfort.

A Good Message

In *Romans 10:15*, Paul quotes from *Isaiah 52:7*. The words of the preacher are positive without exception: ‘beautiful’, ‘pleasant’, ‘message of peace’, ‘glad tidings’ and ‘good things’ (τὰ ἀγαθὰ/ta agatha).

These ‘evangelists’ bring good news, a message of peace (compare *Ephesians 2:17*), and ‘glad tidings of good things’. They are called to proclaim a ‘shalom’, which does more than merely nurture illusions or dreams. The peace of God, which begins in the hearts of individuals, will eventually put an end to all bloodshed and all tears. These messengers of peace proclaim ‘shalom’ in an all-inclusive sense. The ‘good things’ are obviously the ‘wealth’ of the messianic kingdom.

Unfortunately, in the minds of many well-meaning, Bible-believing Christians, the “not so good” dominates when talking about the Jewish people and even in personal encounters with them. The “not so good” could include The great tribulation (before which ‘the Church’ will be raptured, of course!), that Jerusalem will be destroyed once more and “that two parts therein shall be cut off and die” (compare *Zechariah 13:8*), the woes of *Matthew 24*, the wars of Gog and Magog (*Ezekiel 38-39*), or the famous ‘battle of Armageddon’ (*Revelation 16:16*). All these issues offer far more lucrative material for speculation than something ‘good’. A misdirected prophetic curiosity, however, can easily—and often involuntarily—

develop into a message of horror, causing anything ‘good’ to pale in comparison.

A Message of Comfort

In his commentary on *Romans*, Adolf Schlatter suggests that the feet of those messengers of joy are “beautiful because they do not come with a word of judgment, but with the gospel that offers the peace of God”.

It is not by accident that Paul, through his use of *Isaiah 52*, refers his readers back to the second part of the book of *Isaiah* (*Isaiah 40-66*). The Jewish people call it ‘ישעיהו הננוחם’/Yeshayahu HaMenachem, ‘Isaiah the comforter’. In contrast, the first part of this prophetic book (*Isaiah 1-39*) is known as ‘ישעיהו השופט’/Yeshayahu HaShofet, ‘Isaiah the judge’.

The prophet, well aware of the sin and unrighteousness of his people, begins the 40th chapter of his book with the words: “Comfort, comfort my people!”, says your God. ‘Speak to the heart of Jerusalem. Cry to her, that her military service (modern Hebrew) has come to an end, that her offence is forgiven’ (*Isaiah 40:1-2*).

In the second part of the book of *Isaiah*, a mysterious ‘third player’ repeatedly appears on the scene to whom the God of Israel can speak as ‘your God’, but who is differentiated from ‘my people’. God has called an instrument out of the Gentile nations to comfort Israel, to speak tenderly to Jerusalem and to proclaim to her that her hard service has come to an end.

These Hebrew words of *Isaiah 40*, taken literally and without any explanation or



The Judea mountains, near Jerusalem. | Photo: Shutterstock

exposition, are incredibly applicable in modern Israel today. Orthodox Jews in particular, are astonished when a Gentile, a ‘pagan’, conveys comfort to them in a ‘friendly’ or even in a ‘loving’ way. In the best case, they have experienced Gentiles who tried to make them aware of how far away from her divine destiny Israel is living. But now Gentiles are coming along who are not only friendly but who also proclaim that “her slavery is ended”.

In today’s modern language, the Hebrew word, which is often rendered as ‘warfare’ or ‘slavery’, designates ‘military service’. Loving words of the ‘end of military service’ are like a healing balm to the spirit of frightened parents whose sons have to serve three years in the army, sometimes under life-threatening circumstances.

Understanding that judgement follows sin, and knowing that God is just, it is easy to imagine the identity crisis and the soul-searching the Jewish people deal with. On the other hand, someone who has not been ‘my people’ from birth and yet has come to know the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as their heavenly Father is able to definitively say; “her iniquity is [already] pardoned”.

Reflection

By Rev Oscar Lohuis
Christians for Israel
Netherlands

Watchmen on the Walls of Jerusalem

The State of Israel is being seriously threatened. Governments, terror organisations and whole crowds of people are coming out unashamedly saying that Israel must be destroyed and that the world’s only Jewish state has no right to exist. It is only a very small country in the whole of the Middle East, with very few inhabitants, yet the fight against Israel and the battle for Jerusalem has become the focus of world politics.

As a result of demonising and delegitimising Israel, Jews worldwide are increasingly at risk due to the alarming increase of antisemitism. Jewish students at universities oftentimes no longer dare to openly show that they are Jews because of the resulting hostile climate and the many incidents of violence against Jews. Everyone talks about diversity, equality and inclusiveness, but no action is taken against calling for the genocide of Jews.

Standing in the Gap

As Christians, we have two options. We can either withdraw or stand in the gap. We can remain silent or speak out. We can be intimidated or be bold. We can stay put or stand up for the truth. The Lord God is appointing watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem at this time. Watchmen are needed when the city is under threat. But these watchmen are not just watching for possible enemies who come toward the city with evil intentions. *Isaiah 62:6-7* says that these watchmen also look upward, that they remind the Lord of His promises for Israel.

Spiritual Battle

“I have posted watchmen on your walls, Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the Lord, give yourselves no rest, and give Him no rest till He establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth.” The reason why there is so much enmity against Israel is because of this tremendously beautiful plan of God and the destiny He has for Jerusalem. It is profoundly a spiritual battle, and so let us stand in the gap for the Jewish people, most of all in prayer. Personally, I have never been more convinced of the righteous need to stand with Israel and the Jewish people than today. I hope that you feel the same way.

Facts Speak

Swords of Iron War Situation Update



11,000
rockets fired into Israel from Gaza and Lebanon



253 civilians and soldiers were taken hostage
132 are still captive



1,496
killed



217,921
people evacuated from their homes



14,047
civilians and soldiers injured



295,000
reserve soldiers mobilised

Source: The Institute for National Security Studies—Tel Aviv University, as of February 2024

Israel at War: Prophecy Fulfilled—Psalm 2

■ Kameel Majdali

Director | Teach All Nations Inc.

The horrifying terrorist attack on Israel was planned with deadly detail and executed with horrifying haste. Even the date of deployment, 7 October 2023, was planned: it was one day after the fiftieth anniversary of another existential surprise military attack on Israel—the Yom Kippur War of 1973. This war brought the world to the brink of a nuclear Armageddon.

Make no mistake about it: this is not just a war between Israel and Hamas or Hamas's allies like the Houthis, Hezbollah, and Iran. It involves the entire world. Consider this: peaceful, prosperous Australia was put on an Israeli travel advisory because of the shocking public displays of antisemitism in Sydney and Melbourne. The 'fishers' and 'hunters' are loose (*Jeremiah 16:16*).

Why did Hamas attack Israel with unprecedented barbarism? Why do major nations, the United Nations, and major lobby groups fail to condemn the 7 Oct. attack? Why is antisemitism raging worldwide in a latter-day version of *Kristallnacht*? Why is the Israel-Hamas War different and more dangerous than previous conflicts? Most importantly, are we seeing the fulfilment of Bible prophecy?

Bible prophecies of the last days speak of Israel at war leading up to the coming of Messiah. These include *Psalm 83*, *Ezekiel 38-39*, *Zechariah 12, 14*, and *Revelation 19*. Let's not forget Christ's Olivet discourse found in *Matthew 24*, *Mark 13*, and *Luke 21*—it speaks of 'wars and rumours of wars.' While Bible prophecy is a lifetime of study, discussion, and reflection, we can start this series with a classic Messianic passage: *Psalm 2*.

Why the Fuss?

The second psalm rhetorically begins: *Why do the heathen (nations) rage?* Good question.

The answer is both bad news and good news, depending on your spiritual state. For those who live and love this present evil world, it is catastrophically bad news. Yet for those who know and walk with the Lord, it is the best news possible, called the 'blessed hope' of the church (*Titus 2:13*).

The reason for the rage is that the King—the Son of David, Son of God—is coming back to earth (vs. 6-7). Furthermore, the King is coming to Zion. 'Zion' is an important but highly misunderstood word. While it is the name associated with Zionism, it can



| Photo: Adobe Stock

mean 'Jerusalem,' 'Israel,' or 'the Jewish people,' depending on the Biblical context. For our purposes, it means the royal section of Jerusalem, the capital.

In short, the prophetic prospect of Messiah, the Son of David, taking His rightful place on David's throne in Zion is causing an international storm. When He comes, the Lord will ask for—and receive—the nations of the world as His inheritance (v. 8). He will rule with a 'rod of iron' (v. 9 and repeated three times in *Revelation*). The Messiah will clean up the mess of criminality, corruption, tyranny, and unrighteousness. Complete obedience will be required (v. 11-12). No wonder the rebels of this world are panicking.

...this is not just a war between Israel and Hamas or Hamas's allies... it involves the entire world.

Now, of course, the world powers neither know nor care about ancient prophecies and their fulfilment. Yet, there are spiritual powers that both know and care about these events: Satan and the demons. During Jesus' earthly ministry, the multitudes loved Him but were unclear about his true identity: was he John the Baptist, Elijah, Elisha or one of the other prophets? However, the demons were one hundred per cent clear on His real identity: You are the Son of God, they exclaimed repeatedly (*Matthew 8:29*; *Mark 3:11*; *5:7*; *Luke 4:41*; *8:28*).

Like Satan, these malevolent spiritual forces know the Bible and tremble at the thought of the King coming to Zion. It means their time is up. And they are adept at stirring up the kingdoms of this world to rise up in futility to stop the transition to the kingdom of our Lord and Christ.

After observing the collective global

tantrum below, the Lord's reaction is a derisive laugh (v. 4). The rebels in charge are confused, fearful, and striking back furiously; they probably realise that their resistance cannot stop the inevitable, but they want to slow it down and trip it up for as long as they can.

Maybe now we can get a greater understanding of why there is a massive outbreak of antisemitism and persecution of Christians worldwide. Or why there is the naggingly persistent question of Israel's right to exist? Or why most of the world, including the Western world, rejects the notion of a united Jerusalem under the sovereignty of Israel.

Just look at Australia's track record on this topic: at first, Australia recognised

only Tel Aviv as Israel's capital. Then, the Morrison Coalition government recognised Jerusalem as Israel's capital; after some blowback, they modified that recognition to include only 'West Jerusalem.' The government promised to move the Australian embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem only when a peace treaty was signed with Palestine. Then, the Albanese Labour Government came into power and rescinded the recognition of West Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Australia has gone full circle.

Consider this: a united, flourishing capital city is the ideal place for the Son of David/Son of God to return. As is written in *Psalm 102:16*: 'When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.' When this happens, then 'the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever' (*Revelation 11:15*).

Short News

Extraordinary Find



In a remarkable discovery, Israeli reserve soldiers on routine patrol near the Gaza border stumbled upon a 1900-year-old grinding mortar. The mortar was used to grind grain and made of basalt (volcanic rock). One of the reservists, Lt. Col. Yair Amitsur, who works as an archaeologist and tour guide for the Israel Antiquities Authority, immediately recognised what it was. The find is special because basalt is not found in this area and was probably once brought to this area. Amitsur explained: "The tool reminds us that throughout the generations, the Western Negev served as a significant settlement area, where a variety of cultures settled."

| Photo: Israel Antiquities Authority

"Hamas Steals"

According to reactions from Gazans received by a news channel, Hamas is regularly confiscating international aid goods in Gaza. Someone wrote: "There are long lines for the humanitarian goods, but it is all stolen goods." And: "Life is made impossible for us. All of Hamas is in Rafah." Citizens in Gaza who speak out against Hamas can generally be met with disapproval. Hamas uses its control of aid goods to exercise power.

Tunnels Uncovered



The Israel Defense Forces uncovered a tunnel in Khan Younis in southern Gaza where Israeli hostages had been held in harsh and inhumane conditions. According to testimonies of hostages who returned from Gaza, this is where some of them were held most of their time in captivity. The entrance of the vast tunnel network was beneath the home of a Hamas commander. Senior Israeli defence officials now assess that Hamas's Gaza tunnel network is 350-450 miles long, far longer than previously believed. The tunnels were used for various purposes: combat purposes, ammunition storage and connection to other tunnels.

Amalek, Opposite of Israel

■ Lea de Lange

The Scroll of Esther is an exceptional book in the Scriptures. God is not mentioned, or only once, furtively, indicated by Mordechai in a conversation with Queen Esther. If she will not come to the rescue of the Jews, then “Salvation will come from another place” (God?). The protagonists, Mordechai and Esther, seem to be hiding in a foreign land, where they bear a kind of pseudonym, Mordechai (after Marduk, a Persian idol) and Esther (after the Persian Venus), although there is also a Hebrew root in the name ‘Esther’: ‘Astir’ (I will hide). Everything happens tersely in this Scroll; even God rules His people from behind thick screens, evoking associations to the clouds of ‘Kawod’—glory—that shelter the people in the desert so Amalek has no hold over them. There, during the exodus from Egypt, God manifests Himself emphatically, unmasked. It is He Himself who passes through Mitzrayim (Egypt), who speaks to Moses, who bestows the teachings on His people from Sinai, but here in Persia under King Achashverosh (*Xerxes I*, 486 – 465 BCE), everything happens in secret. God hides His face, perhaps because the far-flung people cannot bear this face.

The evil role in the story is played by Haman, a descendant of the Amalekite king Agag and a high-ranking politician before whom all throw themselves into the dust, all except Mordechai. Why? Mordechai is from the tribe of Benjamin, Yaakov’s youngest son, still unborn when father Yaakov bowed to the wicked Esav, ancestor of Haman. Benjamin remained unaffected by this humiliation: he was unborn. Mordechai, the scion, is the Jewish man, bowing only before God.

Haman gossips to Achashverosh like a leering snake about the Jewish people, as enemies of Israel are wont to do, trying to sully the good name after which Israel will be easy to exterminate (compare: Nazi Germany, compare: the Arab narratives, designed to sow hatred against Israel so that it will lose customary international rights, become ‘outlawed’. The daily increase in antisemitism proves the soundness of the old tactic).

Every Adar, the last month of the Jewish year, Israel commemorates the events in Shushan, the capital of the great Persian Empire. The destruction of Israel did not proceed there; the Jews were given royal permission to defend themselves. Haman does not succeed in his plan: genocide. That’s all? Yes, but it is a lot; thinking back to the Sho’ah, we know how much. And even today... if the



Jewish men reading a large Scroll of Esther, which tells the story of the Jewish festival of Purim, at the Western Wall. | Photo: Flash90

world would simply let Israel fight (and conquer without turning back the clock later) against her enemy, then peace would have reigned in the Middle East for decades.

The Jews in Persia strike back, and if Israel goes to war against Amalek, God will be with them; after all, it is God Himself who forbade His people to forget what and who Amalek is to Israel: “Remember what Amalek did to you.”

On the *Shabbat* before the *Feast of Purim*, the congregation of Israel reads in the *Book of Deuteronomy* (25) the passage called ‘Zechor’, ‘Remember’. Never forget what Amalek did when you left Egypt. Flatten out any memory of Amalek among the heavens, but do not forget. What did Amalek do? It attacked Israel’s weak and weary (weak in doctrine, straying from faith). Amalek does not fear God, unlike Israel, and that is why the Bible commands Israel that “When you find peace from your enemies around you in the Land that the Lord your God will give you for an inheritance to possess it, that you shall wipe out every memory of Amalek from under the heavens, you shall remember this.” This is a God-mandated war, to be waged by men and women against Amalek fighting against God Himself. Israel must wage God’s war on earth against a demonic entity, existing only to ‘lick up Israel’s blood’ like dogs.

At the *Feast of Purim*, the Esther Scroll is read aloud; everyone must hear every word and carefully follow the

reading. It is a feast of joy. One should send each other edible gifts and also think of the poor, all to promote unity and brotherly love within Israel, because when Israel is united, then Amalek has no hold on them, no hold on the weak and weary, the ‘missing’ is filled by the strong, the indefatigable. The people are strong.

When the world is delivered from all evil, when the promised kingdom of God be revealed on our earth, then all prophetic predictions will be actual, no longer veiled, covered up. Man will see what Israel’s Prophets foretold; God reveals His face to us forever unveiled. Israel will have reached its destination: a holy people, a kingdom of priests studying the *Torah* scrolls. No enemy will then be able to threaten Israel, even the memory of them will have vanished, but still, Israel will unfold the Scroll of Esther from year to year to read the *Purim* story, word for word, reverently as it was commanded to the people once and for all. When Israel will live forever in peace in the Land of the Fathers, even then, it will remember every year how an antithesis raged in the world, a negative of Israel, a cold and chilling people who extinguished the fire of the burning bush, even the fire of Israel: Amalek, a people living to harm Israel. Just as Israel was supposed to serve God with joy, Amalek sought joy in its destruction.

Lea de Lange (1938-2013) was a Dutch-Israeli writer. This is an adaptation of an article that first appeared in Dutch in 2004.

Signs of Faith
By Kees de Vreugd

Sabbath Candles

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

It is Friday evening. Night falls, and the working week is completed. Eighteen minutes before *Shabbat* begins, Jewish girls and women light the lights of the *Shabbat*.

Lighting the candles is the first *mitzvah* (religious duty) of the *Sabbath*, even before *kiddush* is made. Generally, at least two candles are lit. They refer to the *Sabbath* commandment in the two versions of the Ten Commandments: “Remember the Sabbath day” (*Exodus 20:8*) and “Observe the Sabbath day” (*Deuteronomy 5:12*). The woman is the

backbone of the home and of the people of Israel. Therefore, she typically lights the candles. She often lights a candle for each of her children in addition to the two *Sabbath* candles. Tea lights can be used for this. But because the light also recalls the *menorah* in the temple, some people use lamps with olive oil. In any case, the light should burn long enough to enjoy it in the evening.

The light of the candle, the light of the *Sabbath*, refers to the light of the first day of creation. The *Sabbath* is the end and culmination of the creation week, but creation is an ongoing process. The light sheds its glow ahead of the new week.

In the Bible, we find no explicit instruction to light *Sabbath* candles. Nevertheless, the *berachah* (blessing) that accompanies it gives thanks to God

for sanctifying Israel with His commandments and ordering the lighting of the *Sabbath* lights. Jewish lore has heard all kinds of allusions to it in the Bible. The basis is the ‘delight’ and honour of the *Sabbath* (*Isaiah 58:13*). Light gives an atmosphere of dignity and brilliance; it brings peace because it makes us discern each other’s unique qualities and so be together in harmony. Moreover, it is written, “For the commandment is a lamp and *Torah* is light” (*Proverbs 6:23*).

Finally, it also resembles the soul. The flame needs the matter of the candle. Similarly, the soul needs the body to express its potential in this world. Light, like the soul, is intangible, immaterial. A flame is always striving upwards. So does the soul.

Important Projects in 2023

Thank you for your Generous Help!

“Save your people and bless your inheritance; be their shepherd and carry them forever.” Psalm 28:9

It has been a challenging year for Israel. Since the massacre on 7 October 2023, and the war it caused, Israel and the entire Jewish people are particularly dependent on reliable friends who stand by their side. Thank you for your help, which has made it possible to alleviate hardship, provide comfort and give hope. A heartfelt thank you on behalf of all the people who were helped! The donations and prayers from Christians for Israel are a ray of hope!

Below, you will find more information about our most important projects.

We would like to thank you for all the donations received. We are also very grateful for the donations for our ministry costs, including the production, print and postage of our free newspaper, *Israel & Christians Today*.

Emergency Campaign Israel—October 2023

Residents of the various kibbutzim towns and villages hit by the terrorists on 7 Oct. have been evacuated and housed in temporary facilities. Some of their homes were destroyed, looted or burnt down. Children have been orphaned, and some parents are now childless. There are daily rocket alerts in the south and north. Many are traumatised, especially the hostages who were released. Together with organisations in Israel, we assist where help is needed: Clothes, shoes, medicine, psychotherapy, doctor visits, learning programmes for children, accommodation and much more.



Emergency Aid to Israel after the attacks on 7 October

Aliyah

In 2023, we once again supported immigration of Jews from Ukraine, Russia, Ethiopia and France. A new start in Israel is not always easy. We provide help with the integration of new immigrants directly on-site in Israel. Even after 7 Oct., young people from Ukraine (see photos) have continued to immigrate to Israel to



Aliyah from Ukraine, France, Ethiopia and other countries

realise their dream. They want to complete their schooling in Israel and integrate into society.

First Home in the Homeland

First Home in the Homeland offers young families a loving home in a kibbutz to assist them with their integration. For them, moving to Israel is the fulfilment of a dream. However, many new immigrants find it difficult to build a new social network and often feel isolated because they do not yet speak the Hebrew language well. Through this programme, they quickly connect with other families and learn Hebrew. This prepares them well for their life and their new job in Israel.



(Left) First Home in the Homeland. (Right) SOS Ukraine: Emergency Aid, Food Parcels

SOS Ukraine

With your help, we were able to help more than 6,000 Ukrainian Jews emigrate to Israel. Our team in Ukraine worked tirelessly in 2023. They brought food parcels across the country, wherever there was a great need. They visited Holocaust survivors and took people who wanted to make *aliyah* across the Moldovan border, from where they were taken to the consulate and airport in Kishinev or Bucharest.

Holocaust Survivors

For many Holocaust survivors, the feeling of loneliness is added to the existing material hardships. In addition, more than half of them suffer from psychological after-effects of oppressive and traumatic experiences endured during their childhood or youth. After the massacre on 7 Oct., many fears have resurfaced. With the support of the Café Europa project in Jerusalem, lonely survivors can meet weekly for a coffee break with a programme. The Hineni soup kitchen often provides Holocaust Survivors with their only meal of the day. We were also able to help impoverished Holocaust survivors in Ukraine this year. They receive help in the form of home visits, food, the financing of medication, glasses, hearing aids and much more.



Holocaust Survivors in Israel and Ukraine

The Jaffa Institute

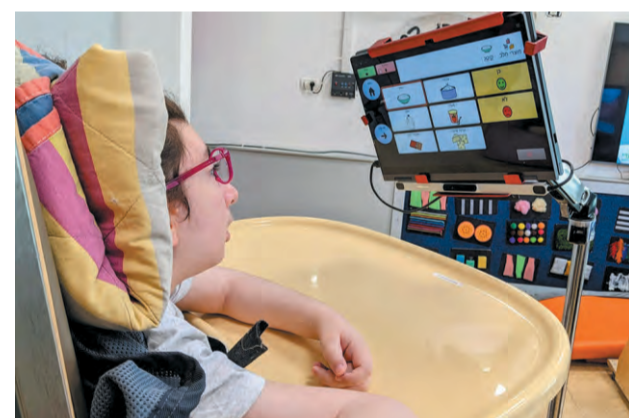
The Jaffa Institute helps children at risk because they come from disadvantaged families. That may be because of having an alcoholic father leaving a mother who cannot cope with her family or because they are orphans. Through the Jaffa Institute, they not only receive education and attention but also food and a vision for their lives. Children and young people receive a warm lunch as part of the after-school programmes.



Jaffa Institute: help for children at risk

ADI

ADI helps children and young people with multiple disabilities in Jerusalem and the Negev. Jewish, Arab and Bedouin children find a home here where they are cared for and supported.



ADI: Help for children with multiple disabilities

Arab Christians

Thanks to your donations, it was possible to organise a summer Bible camp for the members of the First Baptist Church in Bethlehem, led by Rev Naim Khoury. Clothing, food and small Christmas surprises were purchased and distributed in Bethlehem and Nazareth.



Support for Arab Christians

Please continue to faithfully support these projects in 2024!

Food Parcels for Jewish Communities

Your Support is Needed

Dear friends of Israel and the Jewish people,

As Christians for Israel, we have been distributing food parcels to the Jewish community in Ukraine for many years. Facing the challenges of a second winter during the war, the temperatures plummet well below freezing. Amidst the uncertainties wrought by the ongoing war, we hold steadfast to the belief that God continues to guide His people through these difficult times. He cares for them and continues with His plan!

Recently, we had the privilege of visiting 82-year-old Jewish Valentina in her modest, dilapidated home in eastern Ukraine. Confined to her bed, the food parcel we delivered was crucial, yet equally significant was the comfort we could offer through our visit. We assured Valentina that the God of Israel watches over her.

The provision of food aid remains an important part of Christians for Israel's efforts in Ukraine. This winter, our goal is to distribute more than 40,000 food packages (equivalent to over 400,000 pounds) to support needy Jewish elderly, struggling families, and refugees.

Knowing that we can contribute to the well-being of the Jewish people brings solace and motivation. We invite you to join us in making this important work possible through your generous donations and prayers. Together, let us bring comfort and encouragement to those in need.



Warm greetings on behalf of the entire team of Christians for Israel in Ukraine.



Keen Carlier
Aliyah Fieldworker
Christians for Israel Ukraine



In Ukraine, tens of thousands of Jews continue to face poverty. The provision of food parcels by the Christians for Israel team is crucial for these individuals to withstand the harsh winter conditions.

This winter in Ukraine, our goal is to distribute 40,000 food parcels to impoverished Jewish families, Holocaust survivors and the elderly. A food parcel costs €15 or US\$15.

Your assistance can make a significant difference. Will you support one or more parcels?



- One €15 or US\$15 parcel contains:
- 1 kg spaghetti
 - 1 kg macaroni
 - 1 kg grits
 - 1 kg rice
 - 1 kg bulgur
 - 1 kg sugar
 - 2 kg flour
 - 500 gm oatmeal
 - 1 tin of peas
 - 1 tin of corn
 - 1 litre cooking oil
 - 1 tin of chicken
 - 1 pack of coffee
 - 1 pack of tea
 - 1 bar of chocolate

YES! I Want to Support Christians for Israel

CHRISTIANS FOR ISRAEL MINISTRY

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

ALIYAH - BRING THE JEWS HOME

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

SOCIAL WELFARE PROJECTS

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

TOTAL DONATION

DONATION

.....

\$.....

TEACHING RESOURCES

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

To order these and other resources, go to www.c4israel.org/webshop



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