

THEME

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INTRODUCTION



Israel at war

KEES DE VREUGD

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ctober 7th, 2023, felt as a turning point in Israel's history. Israel was brutally attacked by Palestinian terrorists from the Gaza strip, who thereby broke the existing ceasefire. Since then, Israel is at war.

It is a war that certainly has spiritual dimensions. Isn't it remarkable that, though Israel was attacked, very soon the Palestinian Gazans succeeded in turning the world's opinion against Israel and gaining the victim role again? Isn't it remarkable that everywhere in the world, but especially in Europe and the Anglo-Saxon sphere of influence, soon after the Hamas pogrom, violent protests against Israel broke out as if Israel was the aggressor?

Isn't it remarkable that now Israel is heading to victory in Gaza, the world is trying to prevent Israel from obtaining its legitimate goals? It is absurd that the world is allowing the aggressor Hamas to dictate the outcome of the war by pressuring Israel to a ceasefire without the precondition of the release of all the hostages. The unconditional release of all the hostages can and must be the only legitimate precondition for any talks about a ceasefire.

In short, the world is again turning against Israel. Where do we stand as Christians? In this volume we hope to offer some Biblical perspectives on Israel's war. Let us stand for Israel. Pray for the release of the hostages, pray for the protection of Israel and for the peace of Jerusalem.

REV. JAAP DE VREUGD

A reeling cup and a heavy stone

Sermon outline

'Behold, I am going to make Jerusalem
a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around;
and when the siege is against Jerusalem,
it will also be against Judah.

It will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem
a heavy stone for all the peoples;
all who lift it will be severely injured.

And all the nations of the earth
will be gathered against it.'



onderfully powerful are the images in Zechariah 12:2 and 3. The prophet uses two images: the image of a drinking cup and the image of a stone. Both these images are about Jerusalem. I, says the LORD, am going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around.

The image speaks plain language. It is reminiscent of a drinking party. The guests feast on wine and spirits. With eager hands, they grab the glasses and drinking bowls. They are getting increasingly thirsty. Soon they will be intoxicated by the wine and fall silent. Thus the nations all around are grasping at Jerusalem. Just as a alcoholic cannot stay away from the bottle, so the hostile nations cannot stay away from Jerusalem. It is a kind of intoxication, a kind of addiction. They indulge in Ierusalem – but then they themselves become intoxicated and fall. They literally succumb to their ardent lust for Jerusalem! Jerusalem, which they covet so passionately, becomes their downfall.

A CONTEST FOR THE NATIONS

Then the second image. I, says the LORD, will make Jerusalem a stone difficult for all peoples to lift; all who lift it will surely inflict deep cuts upon themselves, and all the peoples of the earth will gather against it.

You notice, by the way, that the circle has widened here: before it was about the nations around, now it is about all the peoples of the earth – the whole world is involved in Jerusalem.

With this image one has to think of athletes, weight lifters. This was also a popular sport in ancient times: measuring each other's strength when lifting weights. Back then, they did this with large flat stones. You took such a stone and tried to lift it above your head. And then, of course, the trick was to take an increasingly heavier stone and lift it. But, if you go too far with that now, you can

injure yourself badly: imagine that you cannot hold the stone anymore, and you get it on your body! Perhaps precisely because of the danger, the challenge, the risk, people will still try it again and again.

So all the nations of the earth will test their strength on Jerusalem. It will become, as it were, a contest for the nations, who can go furthest with Jerusalem, who carries the most weight. They lift up Jerusalem like a lifting stone – but: they trample on it! Jerusalem becomes their fall, their downfall.

All who lift it, the lifting stone Jerusalem, will injure themselves dearly. Jerusalem, a troublesome stone to the nations.

How astonishingly topical these words are again in our days! Not a day passes, or Jerusalem is in the world news. In a rush of intoxication, the nations stretch out their hands to that troublesome stone – to combine the two images for now.

The Arab world in particular is coveting Jerusalem. In the dispute with Israel, the Islamic claims to Jerusalem, 'Al Quds', are not out of the blue. Calls for the liberation of the Al Aqsa Mosque from the hands of the 'infidels' are constantly heard. These are not only the Jews, by the way, but also the Christians, judging by the text written on the Dome of the Rock: 'Allah is the greatest, and He has no son'. That whole area of the Temple Mount is thus an extremely contentious and inflammable area.

The tensions and problems really start when Jerusalem comes up. The PLO once declared Jerusalem the capital of the Palestinian state, which it never was and never will be. And on that grim October 7th, the day of the violent Hamas pogrom, the battle cry was 'Al Aqsa flood' accompanied by the 'promise' that October 7 would be repeated until Israel and all Jews were off the map. The murderous intentions are more than clear. And support comes

from Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad, the PLO, Iran and the Houthis. They want to protect the Temple Mount but, of course, the paradox is that the Temple Mount is now protected by the Israeli anti-aircraft defense system against the rockets of Hamas and consorts.

And the whole world is getting involved. Initially, the whole world was in shock when the images of 7 October became public. But in no time, Israel found itself in the dock. When Israel declared war on Hamas with a twofold aim: free the hostages and eliminate Hamas, and the first images of the Gaza war became world news, the accusing fingers quickly went in Israel's direction: disproportionate, too many innocent victims, and even accusations of genocide.

The question is how 'innocent' the Gazans are; it is certain that not all have been in league with Hamas, but very many have; think of the images of civilians singing and dancing on 7 October. Meanwhile, it is certain that a large proportion of the officials of the UN bodies in Gaza are members of Hamas, and despite

constant doubts cast on the information given by Israel, civilians have been widely used as human shields e.g. in hospitals and population centres etc. etc.

On a global scale, an unprecedented arsenal of anti-Semitism has been unleashed with roaring proclamations and threats against Jewish civilians. Meanwhile, the UN, led by a clearly biased president, issues condemnation after condemnation. An accusation of genocide has even been lodged with the International Criminal Court, nota bene by South Africa, a notoriously corrupt country.

According to reports, the ANC (the leading group) was just about bankrupt and then resorted to Iran in sympathy with Hamas, after which the ayatollahs pulled the purse strings. Need I mention more? The Vatican; the World Council of Churches and you name it.

Jerusalem, an intoxicating drinking vessel and a troublesome stone! At the centre of world politics. And so this is a particularly topical issue. Jerusalem today is a bowl of intoxication to which the nations around are eagerly stretching their hands. And it is a troublesome stone, to which the peoples of the earth threaten to injure themselves. Now that is topicality!

Zechariah speaks prophetically of the coming time of salvation. The last chapters of his book speak of the great future, which is coming. 'In that day' – a definite expression for that final period in world history, culminating in the breakthrough of the Kingdom of God.

THE LAST OF DAYS

When exactly is that and how long will it last? In any case, as New Testament believers, we know that "in that day" also has everything to do with the coming of the Messiah – His first as well as His second coming. We could say that the last days last from Jesus' ascension to His return in glory. The closer it gets to the Second Coming now, the more exciting it becomes. The LORD calls us in the last days to be attentive to what He has promised and spoken and to what He is doing. And in that, Jerusalem occupies a central place.

More and more things are focusing around

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Jerusalem and Israel. The Lord has brought home large parts of His ancient people from centuries of exile to the land of the fathers. We witness this in our days. And He brought and is bringing the children of Abraham back to Jerusalem. Jerusalem is again the heart of that people. Israel without Jerusalem is a body without a heart. But it is again a Jewish city in a Jewish land. Throughout the centuries, in the Diaspora, the people have yearned for Jerusalem. Great was the emotion when the city of the great King came back into the hands of His people.

TROUBLESOME STONE

But that is not unchallenged! For the nations around are coveting lerusalem. And to all nations lerusalem is a troublesome stone. Yes, the prophecy even says, all the nations of the earth will move against her Jerusalem and Judah will be terribly distressed. But the LORD will shelter the inhabitants of Jerusalem and keep His eyes open over the house of Judah.

He will strike the horses of the nations – paragons of power and military might – with timidity and blindness, and the riders with insanity. He will break the power of the nations, who extend their hand to Jerusalem. Yea even: I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem, says the LORD.

The chiefs of Judah will burn like a basin of fire among the wood of the surrounding nations. An impressive picture. But He will save Jerusalem. He will preserve the tents of Judah. And Jerusalem will still remain in its own place at Jerusalem, so it sounds almost triumphantly. And the nations that have covetously stretched out their hand to Jerusalem

shall be stupefied. And the peoples who attempt to lift the burdensome stone will injure themselves. The enemies of Judah and Jerusalem will trample on that troublesome stone and drink themselves drunk.

An impressive prophecy. I cannot fill in all the details. Nor do I need to. I believe we see the line before us from the prophetic Word. The times of the Gentiles are full. Jerusalem is a Jewish city again. God is fulfilling His promises. The Messiah is coming. The Kingdom is coming. And Jerusalem is once again at the heart, the focus of attention.

The LORD

will save

Jerusalem

no matter

what

Those who extend their covetous hand to Jerusalem trample on it and drink themselves drunk!

PLO, Hamas and Jihad, Hezbollah and also the United Nations, the European Union, the Vatican and World Council of Churches won't change that. Jerusalem will still remain in its place at Jerusalem.

In the meantime, though, it is dangerous to lash out against Jerusalem! A troublesome stone.

Finally. Possibly this or that one is wondering: why is it, this enmity and threat again and again? Why do the nations stretch out their hands to Jerusalem, why is Jerusalem again and again that troublesome stone that the world cannot keep away from?

There can only be one answer to that: because God has chosen this place as His world centre, His headquarters – so to speak. Behind it is the resistance to God's plan, the demonic resistance to the coming of the Kingdom of God and of His Messiah. No, of course, politicians and world powers, are not aware of this. Although sometimes there are

politicians and world powers from whom you can read the demonic cynicism. But it is nevertheless true. The power of darkness thwarts the works of God. He even mobilises world powers if possible.

He realises that the LORD is at work with Israel and Jerusalem. Therefore, he goes on a rampage to eliminate the signs. But God's work cannot be broken! The LORD will save Jerusalem no matter what. And Jerusalem will still remain in his place at Jerusalem.

SOLIDARITY

Meanwhile, that calls us Christians to show solidarity. I hear around me here and there that pastors struggle to bring these matters into prayer. But more than ever, Israel needs to be carried in the prayers of Christians who feel connected to Israel. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, pray for comfort and protection for the people, pray for liberation of the hostages, pray for wisdom for the government, pray for wisdom and preservation for the army leadership and the military.





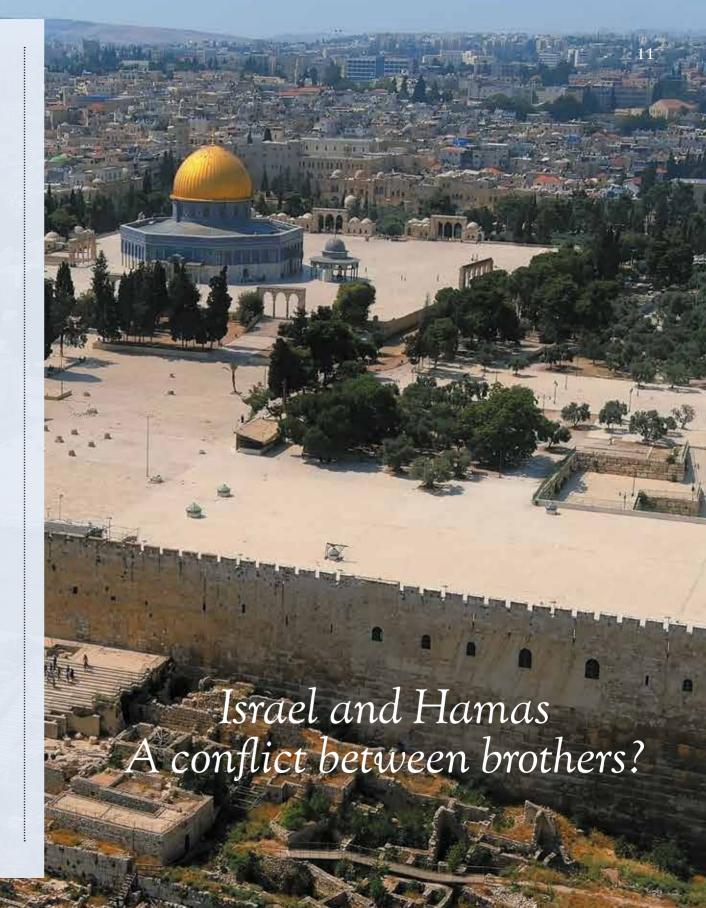
THEME ISRAEL AT WAR

REV. CORNELIS KANT

In numerous Bible studies, articles and sermons in recent decades, the conflict between Israel and the surrounding Arab nations, has been explained as an age-old fraternal dispute. A conflict that dates back to Isaac and Ishmael.

Although Hagar and her son Ishmael are being sent away from the Promised Land, they are given promises and a blessing: 'Behold, I will bless him, and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly; He shall become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But My covenant I will establish with Isaac' (Genesis 17:20-21).

This does not sound like a curse on Ishmael and his Arab descendants.



ndeed, the Arab peoples have become extremely numerous. However, the covenant goes on through Isaac and his later lewish descendants, which is apparently a continuing source of jealousy and conflict. Since the coming of the Jewish Messiah Iesus Christ, however, a door has been opened for all peoples, including Arabs, to become full children of God through faith in Him. It is understandable to speak of a conflict between brothers, who have Abraham as a common ancestor. In a conflict between brothers, it can certainly get rough and there can be casualties. Yet reconciliation between brothers is always possible. The question arises whether the current conflict between Israel and Hamas can also be classified under this concept of a 'fraternal conflict'. I am convinced that this, for several reasons, is absolutely impossible.

AMALEK

There is another fraternal conflict in Genesis: between Jacob and Esau. In the Old Testament we read that, in the context of this fraternal dispute, Israel was often attacked by neighboring nations. But Amalek, descendant from Esau, crossed a border, for which he was eternally cursed. When the people of Israel were liberated from Egypt and passed through the Sinai desert, they were attacked by the Amalekites. Very cunningly, the people of Israel were attacked in the rear, where the weakest people walked, with the purpose of eventually killing all the people of Israel. It was a life-and-death struggle, and Moses, supported by Aaron and Hur, had to hold up his hands. In the end, Israel prevailed: 'Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Write this in a book as a memorial and recite it to Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven" (Exodus 17:14). Amalek and his people are thus not just temporarily defeated but cursed forever.

In Deuteronomy 25:17-19, we read: 'Remember what Amalek did to you along the way when you came out of Egypt: how he met you along the way and attacked among you all the

stragglers at your rear when you were faint and weary; and he did not fear God. Therefore, it shall come about when the LORD your God has given you rest (...) you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven. You must not forget!'

What is the difference between Amalek and a fraternal dispute? Amalek did not aim to merely win a battle against Israel's army or plunder a harvest. It was his goal to commit genocide, starting with the weak: the elderly and children. That was the turning point where the fraternal dispute changed into a curse

Throughout the centuries, there have often been peoples who wanted to exterminate the entire nation of Israel: 'They make shrewd plans against Your people (...) they have said, Come, come, and let us wipe them out as a nation, that the name of Israel be remembered no more' (Psalm 83:3-4). The Psalm ends with Israel's prayer: 'Let them be ashamed and dismayed forever and let them be humiliated and perish' (v. 17). So Amalek does not belong to the category of 'fraternal conflict'.

THE DRAGON AND THE BEAST

We also read about an attempted genocide against Israel in the New Testament, in the end times. In a vision on the island of Patmos, the Apostle John sees a woman who is about to give birth to a son, who will 'herd all the Gentile nations with a rod of iron'. That woman represents Israel, and the son represents Jesus Christ, who is born to the Jewish woman Mary. There is a dragon waiting to devour the child immediately after birth. The dragon represents Satan, who would prefer to devour Jesus, the Savior of the world. John then describes the child going up to God and His throne in heaven, and the woman fleeing from the dragon: 'So the dragon was enraged with the woman and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus' (Revelation 12:17). So, the dragon first aims to destroy the Jewish people and subsequently the Christians as well.

Then we read that a beast comes up who receives all power from the dragon (Revelation 13). Many people are impressed by this beast and worship it. There is going to be an impressive political leader, or a united group of leaders. This leader, this beast, is going to

It is comforting to know that God will protect His people when everything is at stake

speak blasphemies: 'And he opened its mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, that is those who dwell in heaven. And it was also given to him power to make war with the saints (...) All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb' (Revelation 13:6-8).

These horrors, fortunately, do not have the last word. Jesus Christ Himself will come in time to deal with the dragon and the beast and his followers: 'And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet (...) and those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse' (Revela-

tion 19:20-21). Here we see that blasphemy of God, genocide against the Jewish people and persecution of Christians does not ultimately lead to reconciliation, but to curse. So, the beast and those who had received the mark of the beast don't fit the category of a 'fraternal dispute', and there is no reconciliation.

HAMAS

All the aspects mentioned above regarding both Amalek and the beast we also see with Hamas, Its charter states that the ultimate goal is the total destruction of the 'Zionist regime' (= Israel), and the establishment of an Islamic caliphate, in which Christians also have no place. It is not appropriate to claim that Hamas is the beast from the Book of Revelation. We should not draw that conclusion. Besides, the conflict between Israel and Hamas is also too much regionally bound. However, Hamas may well be a 'type' of this beast, as there have been several of such 'types' throughout history. In this context, the many pro-Hamas demonstrations in numerous Western cities are notable.

The Book of Revelation says that the beast 'speaks blasphemies' and that many on earth 'worship' the beast. Israel, therefore, does not have a fraternal dispute with Hamas, and Hezbollah in the North, but is waging a life-and-death struggle, just as Moses, Aaron and Hur waged a life-and-death struggle with Amalek. Israel's survival is at stake. Yet, it's comforting to know that God will protect His people when everything is at stake: 'Salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us' (Luke 1:71).



Israel-Gaza War: Don't ignore what the Bible actually says

Christians today are asking serious questions in response to the 7 October attack by Hamas, to Israel's ensuing war in Gaza, and to the huge anti-Israel protests around the world: Why are the Jewish people and their state hated so much? Why is the Palestinian-Israeli conflict so long-lasting and traumatic? How does modern Israel relate to biblical Israel? Are we witnessing fulfilment of biblical prophecy in any way? How should we relate to the Jewish people now, given that our Saviour is for ever Jewish (Luke 1:32-33; Revelation 22:16)?



SIMPLISTIC

implistic Bible-based responses¹ by some church leaders treat this conflict as if it were just a personal disagreement – 'Blessed are the peacemakers' (Matt 5:9); 'Never take your own revenge' (Rom 12:19); 'Love your enemies' (Luke 6:35). Of course these principles are godly, and modelled by Jesus Himself. But until we have forgiven² a neighbour for torturing, raping and then slaughtering our own little sister or grandmother, we Christians have no right to lecture the grieving citizens of Israel.

Even if we were to treat this like any other international war, the Bible has far more to teach us. God has entrusted governments with 'the sword' to avenge evil and enforce justice (Romans 13:1-7; Luke 14:31-32), and although individuals should not resort to violence (Matthew 26:52), soldiers serving their government can use force justly (Luke 3:14; Matthew 5:41). 'Just war theory's is a robust Christian concept based on biblical patterns found throughout the history and laws of Israel. At the same time, the Bible recognises the tragic justice of collective punishment for the offences of leaders (Luke 19:41-44; 20:15-19; 23:27-31), provided there is due warning given (Luke 11:49-51) and opportunity for innocent individuals to escape (Luke 21:20-22). If Jesus decreed this for His own beloved nation, others cannot expect different standards of justice.

Applied to the current war in Gaza, Israel has taken pains to conduct its warfare against Hamas (not a war against Palestinians) strictly according to international law, as it always does. After all, the idea of human rights originated in Israel's own teaching that every human is equally made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27; Amos 9:7). Israel fully recognises its unique 'chosen' status as a nation is not because they are better than any other people (Deuteronomium 7:7-8; 9:4-7). This is why Israel has consistently welcomed⁴ Gazans for urgent medical treatment, even Hamas leaders and their families, and feel they must justify any change of policy even during wartime. Israel's efforts to spare Palestinian civilian lives during war surpass any other army⁷ in the world. So it is utterly immoral to equate Israel's collateral damage of civilian deaths in Gaza with Hamas' sadistic targeting of defenceless civilians in southern Israel.

SIGNIFICANCE

However, we must not treat this conflict as if it were 'any other war'. Regardless of Israel's response to Messiah Yeshua/Jesus, they remain chosen and loved by God, with irrevocable 'gifts and calling' (Romans 11:28-29). The entire Bible is centred around this one ethnic group, so how can we ignore their ongoing identification with God as a major factor in this war? I propose to explore this significance in three areas: the underlying excuse for attacking Israel at home and abroad, the tactics of Israel's enemy, and the proper reaction of Christians toward the Jewish people.

First, the Bible speaks clearly about the 'gift' of the land. When pro-Palestinians echo the demands of Hamas⁸ that '... Palestine will be free', they are tacitly approving the designation of Israel as an illegitimate coloniser of indigenous Palestinian land. So Christians need to become better informed about modern international law9. In 1022, the community

of nations unanimously recognised Jews to be indigenous alongside Arabs. They legally granted the land 'from the river to the sea' to the Jewish people as a national home in 1922, next door to an Arab state in (Trans)Jordan, implementing Churchill's original two-state solution for all 'Palestine'. Neither was expected to expel its ethnic minorities, however sadly from 1948 onwards there were equivalent numbers¹⁰ of Arabs and Jews who did flee, as often happens¹¹.

The history and legality of the State of Israel did not begin in 1948. But neither did it begin in 1922 or 1917. The Bible records that Israel inherited from father Abraham God's 'gift'

of the land as an eternal covenant (Genesis 15:17-21; 17:7-8; etc.; Exodus 6:5-8; 32:13). Even within their future 'new covenant', God again promised to 'plant them in this land with all My heart and with all My soul' (Jeremiah 31:31-37; 32:36-42). The condition of possessing this inherited land that was 'given for all time' was that Israel keep God's commandments (Deuteronomium 4:40), hence Israel's repeated exiles from the land. But as Paul affirmed, Israel's 'gifts' are not revoked despite sin or exile (Romans 9:4; 11:28-29). We also note that the land was never Israel's exclusive possession. The

law repeatedly affirms that ethnic minorities have equal legal status (Exodus 12:43-49; Leviticus 24:10-22; Numbers 15:11-16, 29-31), provided they too worship Israel's God (Jeremiah 12:14-17).

Surprisingly, the prophet Ezekiel discerned that God would regather the Jewish people to the land even before their repentance and spiritual transformation, to prove His own unmerited faithfulness (Ezekiel 20:39-44; 36:16-32). And the prophet Ezekiel 20:39-44;

et Isaiah made Israel's hope dependent upon the nations. When nations have been drawn to Israel's Messiah, they will then assist the Jewish people to return to their ancestral land (Isaiah 11:10-12; 49:5-7, 22-23; 60:4-9). Therefore, Jesus Himself testified to an ongoing longing to regather Jerusalem's exiled 'children' from the Diaspora (Matthew 23:37-39; see Isaiah 49:14-22), such as Greek-speaking Jewish pilgrims (John 7:35-36; 12:20-32). He understood His mission as being the son of David who would gather both Judah and the 'lost' northern tribes of Israel, to be one flock with one shepherd (John 10:15; 11:51-52; echoing Ezekiel 37:21-24, also Isaiah 56:6-8). He also prophesied that at some point after the Ro-

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man exile, when salvation has been offered to all nations, Jerusalem would again be restored to Jewish sovereignty or 'kingship' (Luke 21:24; Acts 1:6-8). When He returns to reign on earth, His Jewish apostles will then govern the twelve tribes of Israel, and likewise His servants from the nations will inherit 'kingship' over their nations (Matthew 19:28; 25:31-40; Revelation 2:26-27; 7:3-10).

The entire Bible, from beginning to end, testifies that God will surely bring His Jewish people back into their land from the ends of the earth. And this promise will be accomplished only by Israel's Messiah Jesus (Romans 15:8; 2 Corinthians 1:20), through those nations who rally to His standard. This clear biblical teaching was celebrated and pursued by mainstream evangelical Christianity in Britain for 300 years, recognised by scholars' as a primary influence on our 1917 Balfour Declaration. This included some of our greatest spiritual forebears such as Watts and

the Wesleys, Simeon and Spurgeon, Müller and M'Cheyne, and even leading intellects like Milton, Locke and Newton.

Biblical literacy has plummeted in the British church during the last century, so it is little wonder that the convictions of our esteemed ancestors are so rarely reflected today. Had they been alive now, they would be eagerly awaiting and

interceding for the imminent spiritual outpouring upon the regathered Jewish nation, prophesied in Ezekiel 36 and 37.

Second, the Bible alerts us to the tactics of Israel's enemy. Israel's primary opponent throughout history has been Satan, the Father of Lies

(John 8:44) and the Accuser of the Brethren (Revelation 12:7-12; Luke 10:17-20), whose greatest challenger is Israel's angelic prince Michael (Daniel 10:20-21; 12:1). Satan hates the Messiah who will destroy him, and therefore he hates the nation of Israel who gave birth to Messiah (Revelation 12:1-6, 13-17; Genesis 37:9-10).

Antisemitism is the most persistent racial hatred in humanity's history. It arises not only from the unjustified jealousy of nations towards the one chosen to bless them (Genesis 18:17-33; 27:29; Isaiah 19:24-25), but also simply because darkness hates and fears the light (Isaiah 60:1-3, 14). The Jewish people still carry God's special revelation and glory (Romans 3:1-2; 9:4-5), so Satan is determined to slander and slaughter the nation who mediates God's blessing on earth (Esther 3:8-9; Romans 11:12, 15; 15:8-12).

All of Scripture bears witness to the common

human failures of the Jewish people, but Satan goes further, stirring up the world he controls in unending false accusations out of all proportion13 to Israel's faults. In the current war, Israel is unfairly blamed for every death in Gaza. whether combatants¹⁴. human shields¹⁵ of Hamas, or victims of Gazan terror rockets¹⁶, even for simply retaliating to Hamas' sickening aggression. And on our streets and social media,

selective sympathy for only these specific Palestinians (abused 17 for decades 18 by their own people 19) often masks violent spiritual hatred of the one and only Jewish state.

Sometimes criticism is justified, yet when Satan prosecuted the leader of the Jewish nation

in Zechariah 3:1-7, the pre-incarnate Angel of the LORD rebuked the accuser by interceding for the guilty on the basis of God's election. He still does the same for us (Romans 8:34), so let us not be found imitating Satan's work when it comes to Israel.

Third, the Bible defines right attitudes and actions towards Jewish people. Just as children are to honour their parents and wives their husbands for God's sake (Ephesians 6:1-4; 5:22-33), without necessarily implying that the authority figure is morally superior (1 Peter 3:5-6), so also the nations should honour the Jewish people as God's chosen leader nation (Romans 1:16; 2:9-II; II:28-29). The centurions and the Canaanite woman who demonstrated proper humility as non-lews, received blessings associated with 'salvation' which Iesus said 'is from the Jews' (Luke 7:2-10; Acts 10:1-6; Matthew 15:21-28; John 4:22; see Isaiah 35:4-6). He also taught that He will judge nations based on how we have treated 'the least of these brothers of Mine' (Matthew 25:40), which must at least include Jesus' ethnic kinsmen. So Paul warned non-lewish believers against arrogance and ignorance about God's ongoing and especially end-time purposes for His 'beloved' Israel, even in their unbelief (Romans 11:17-28). Instead, he taught that we who have shared in their spiritual blessings ought to minister to them in practical ways (Romans 15:26-27).

In these troubled times for Jewish people worldwide, the least we can do is stand up publicly against all who hate and slander them, for Jesus' sake.

NOTES

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DR. TOBIAS KRÄMER

The woman and the dragon (Revelation 12)

WHAT IS BEHIND THE WORLDWIDE HOSTILITY TOWARDS ISRAEL?

20

THEME
ISRAEL AT WAR

REVELATION 12

great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; [2] and she was with child; and she *cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth.

[3] Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten

Israel

brings forth

the Messiah

and Satan

wants to

destroy Him.

horns, and on his heads were seven diadems. [4] And his tail *swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child.

[5] And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne.

[6] Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she *had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one

thousand two hundred and sixty days.

[7] And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, [8] and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. [9] And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

[10] Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night. [11] And they overcame

him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death. [12] For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time."

[13] And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who

gave birth to the male child. [14] But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she *was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the bresence of the serpent. [15] And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood. [16] But the earth helped the woman. and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the

river which the dragon poured out of his mouth. [17] So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

PART 1: THE MESSIAH IS BORN AND CAUGHT UP TO HEAVEN (1-6)

In Revelation 12, the seer John tells a short story. It is about a woman who gives birth to a son (I-2+5). This son is a ruler, for one day he is to 'rule all the nations with a rod of iron' (5). A dragon is waiting for the birth and wants to devour this child from the womb (4). The situation is precarious: the woman is in labour pains, the child's life is threatened. What does this story mean? The child is clearly the Messiah, the dragon (or serpent) is Satan (9) and the woman is, in my opinion, Israel. Israel brings forth the Messiah and Satan wants to

destroy Him. That is the starting position. Israel brings forth the Messiah, but there is not much mention of the Messiah in what follows. It only says that he is born and is caught up to God (5). This is an abridged version of the story of Jesus: the Messiah is born, dies on the cross, is raised from the dead and taken to heaven. Caught up 'to God and to his throne' (5), he sits at the right hand of God in heaven. He shares in the reign of God or exercises it himself; God shares his throne with him.

At the end of this first section of the text, the initial situation is twofold: the Messiah is caught up in heaven to be with God (5), while the woman finds herself in the desert and is safe there (6). Both lines are developed further below: what the Messiah achieves in heaven is dealt with in Part 2 (7-12), while the woman in the desert is the subject of Part 3 (13-17).

PART 2: SATAN IS REMOVED FROM HEAVEN AND THROWN TO EARTH (7-12)

The enthronement of the Messiah in heaven has tremendous consequences. Satan, the 'accuser of our brothers and sisters' (10), has now had his day. He is cast out of heaven and removed from the throne of God (7-9). The dragon and his angels must give way, their abode is 'no longer found in heaven' (8). Instead, the Messiah is now in heaven. The Messiah is thus taken to heaven, Satan is removed from heaven - and thus the accusation before God's throne falls silent².

It should be noted that Satan comes into view here specifically in his role as *accuser* (10) – and must give way to the Messiah. This means that the voice of the *reconciler* and no longer the voice of the accuser is now heard before God's throne. What a turning point! That is why heaven rejoices and bursts into praise:

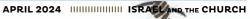
Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of

His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night. (verse 10) However, this change in heaven has consequences on earth. For it is now the place where Satan finds himself. Banished from heaven, he wreaks havoc on earth. His rage is great and his time is short (12). But what is he up to?

PART 3: SATAN PERSECUTES ISRA-EL AND THE CHRISTIANS (13-17)

Satan's main target is the woman, Israel: 'And when the dragon saw that he was thrown to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child' (13). Why the woman? Because she is within Satan's grasp, whereas he can no longer reach the Messiah, who is now in heaven. Satan cannot touch the *Messiah*, but he can touch the *woman*! So, his anger is directed against the woman: against the people of the Messiah, i.e. against *Israel* (17). But God does not abandon Israel. The woman is taken to another place, 'far from the presence of the serpent' (14). This place is the desert. There the woman is safe (6+14)³.

The dragon is now visibly running out of steam. He can reach neither the woman nor the Messiah. Both are beyond his reach, because the Messiah is in heaven and Israel is hidden in the desert. That is why he now turns against 'the rest of her children' (17). But who are these 'others'? According to John, they are 'those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus' (17). This refers to the believers in Christ. They hold to the testimony of Jesus and observe the Torah (cf. 1 John 5:2). Satan is now at war with the believers in Christ (17). The enmity is 'to the death' and there seems to be no end in sight. The context: because the dragon can no longer get hold of the woman, he now takes action against those 'others', against the believers in Christ, against the church of Jesus. Satan hates the church just as much as he hates Israel, and that is why he fights them. This is the focus of v. 17. But



what about the woman? What happens to her next? Firstly, back to the starting point: the woman is brought into the desert by God. Here she is cared for and safe. However, the time in the desert is limited. It is designed for 1260 'days' or a specific sequence of 'times' $(6+14)^5$. We are therefore talking about a period of time that has a beginning and an end. This means that the 'wilderness period' of the woman will end and therefore Israel will one day 'emerge' again. That sounds promising! But how should we visualise this?

From Israel's point of view, the desert is 'outside'. Far away from Jerusalem, perhaps even outside the land of Israel. If Israel is 'in the desert', this means that Israel has disap-

peared from the scene. The Jews are no longer there. They have left their land and are outside it. And that is how it actually happened. The Romans literally wiped Israel off the map in the 1st/2nd century. Thousands of Jews were murdered, tens of thousands were deported into slavery and uncountable numbers were expelled from the land.

Israel was finished, there was no longer a people of Israel in the land of Israel!

Not *in* the land, but *outside* of it there was. In the 'desert' outside, in the worldwide dispersion and far from their homeland, the Jewish people survived throughout the centuries. Despite all the hardships and difficulties, the dispersion throughout the world was actually a place of safety for the Jews. The devil could not get hold of Israel. Even the last and greatest offensive against Israel, the Holocaust, could not wipe Israel out because the Jews were scattered all over the world. As strange as it may sound, the dispersion saved the

Jewish people from total annihilation. Israel survived. Outside, in the dispersion, in the 'wilderness' (14-16).

Anyone who knows the biblical prophets even a little, knows that Israel will not remain in the 'wilderness' outside, i.e. in the dispersion. One day, the wilderness period will end and God will bring his people back. Israel will be restored and live in its land forever. This is a basic feature of biblical prophecy. Today we see Israel returning to its land. God is bringing his people from all over the world back home. And so, we can rejoice: *Am Israel chai*, the people of Israel are alive!

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The devil's

means

against Israel

are

manifold

Today we are living in the time of the return of the lews. Israel's time of desolation is over, Israel is back! But what awaits Israel on its return? The answer is simple: the old enemy, the dragon. His hatred has not diminished and so he will once again attack Israel. With all the means at his disposal. This is to be expected until he is taken out of circulation (Revelation 20).

The devil's means against Israel are manifold. These include worldwide anti-Semitism, globally widespread anti-Israelism, the anti-Israel course of the United Nations, the Islamist anti-Jewish currents behind the Middle East conflict ('Throw the Jews into the sea'), the perpetuation of refugee status for Palestinians in the Middle East, the BDS movement and more. Satan's hatred of Israel resonates in people's hearts and leads to active hostility towards Israel in word and deed. That is the situation.

At the same time, however, God holds His

protective hand over Israel. God preserves His people and brings them to their goal. That is for sure. And so it says in Isaiah 43:1-6:

[I] But now, thus says the Lord, your Creator, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel, "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine! [2] When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, Nor will the flame burn you. [3] For I am the Lord your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I have given Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in your place. [4] Since you are precious in My sight, Since you are honored and I love you, I will give other men in your place and other peoples in exchange for your life. [5] Do not fear, for I am with you;

I will bring your offspring from the east, And gather you from the west. [6] I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' And to the south, 'Do not hold them back.' Bring My sons from afar and My daughters from the ends of the earth.

An extended version of this Bible study can be found in Dossier #7 Die UNRWA und die Flüchtlingsfrage (Bad Homburg 201). Available from www.israelaktuell.de.

NOTES

- For the identification of the woman, see Dossier #7, p 69-70. Mary cannot be meant. For in biblical times, Mary was not yet accorded the sovereign dignity as in
- ² On Satan's fall from heaven, cf. Luke 10:18; John 12:31b.
- The desert as a place of safety has a long tradition in the Bible. Just think of the prophet Elijah, who fled from the persecution of Jezebel into the desert and was cared for by God there (I Kings 17).
- ⁴ Since we are talking about Christians here, a new and different group is actually meant. The translation 'the others' therefore fits better than 'the rest'.
- ⁵ For these dates, see Dossier #7, pp. 70-74. In my opinion, this is the period of time until the beginning of the messianic kingdom.





GREGORY ROSE AND ANDREW TUCKER

Israel on trial in the United Nations

The Jewish State was created in 1948. But it has been violently opposed for over a century, since before it was a physical reality, even while it was still a political idea.

The Zionist movement that developed in the 19th century, as the Jewish people started to return to their homeland, envisioned the establishment of a Jewish homeland secured by international law. That vision of a Jewish homeland was embraced in the internationally-sanctioned Mandate for Palestine after WWI, and led to the creation of the Jewish State of Israel three decades later.

However today, over 75 years since Israel's creation, many UN member states do not even recognize Israel's existence and are committed to its destruction. Even many Western states do not accept Israel as a fully sovereign and equal member of the international community. All of these actors use the UN system to advance their political and ideological goals.

In the

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Since Yasser Arafat launched the Second Intifada two decades ago, the attacks on Israel within the United Nations have intensified, to the point where today (2024) the very existence of the Iewish state is being threatened as never before. Continuing attacks on the Jewish State are taking the form of 'lawfare'. Courts all over the world are being asked to convict Israel, Israelis and Jews of the crimes of 'genocide' and 'apartheid' - allegations that attack the lewish identity of the State and demand its

dismantling. Informed responses, formulated through war rooms or workshops, are needed with increasing urgency.

IDEOLOGICAL ATTACKS

What is lawfare? It is not kinetic war. The Jewish homeland has survived over a century of kinetic warfare: riots and terrorism, the 1948, 1967 and 1973 Arab wars for its destruction, and the continuous attrition campaign of armed attacks conducted by Palestinian militants. Israel has responded successfully to these kinetic warfare tactics, by growing militarily stronger to become a regional power.

Lawfare is the ideological use of the legal system to destroy Israel. Such attacks on Israel – reckoned by numbers of people over time – are principally against the very idea of the Jewish homeland, rather than physical attacks. Consistent ideological themes include denial of Jewish indigenous identity and history, incitement to protect the Al Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount, anti-Semitism (particularly Jewish conspiracy), and glo-

rification of martyrdom while fighting Jews. Muftis have deployed antisemitism to incite Arabs since murderous riots in 1920, before the Jewish State existed.

Despite their enduring themes, ideological attack strategies evolve in a comparable way to military tactics and equipment, taking advantage of time and place. Political campaigning against the British Mandate to establish a lewish homeland in Palestine shifted in the second half of the 20th century to campaigns against the Iewish State of Israel

within a diverse array of contemporary UN and other international organizations.

The British took their cricket bat home without fulfilling the Mandate in 1948². The United Nations condemned Zionism as racism in 1975³. The European Union adopted the 1980 Venice Declaration⁴ on Palestinian statehood and suspended activities under its Association Agreement⁵ with Israel in 2013. The African Union ejected Israeli observers⁶ in 2023.

In the ideological battle space, international

legal attacks against Israel are usually successful.

LAWFARE

Today, lawfare is the predominant form of ideological battle. It is conducted through legal machinery, deploying legal tactics that misuse international law by applying it in extraordinary ways other than that for which it was intended or designed.

For example, a Hamas lawfare tactic is to deliberately place civilians in harm's way in armed conflict, to leverage in its favor laws intended to limit battlefield suffering of civilians. The Israeli military targeted by this lawfare tactic must either harm the innocent or abort combat. Either way, the lawfare tactic works: to win ideological victory against the Israeli military for its alleged deliberate war crimes, or to block it from battle.

Of course, placing civilians in harm's way undermines the purpose and intent of international humanitarian laws by deliberately risking or causing harm to the innocent. The lawfare tactic undermines the integrity of the legal system that it leverages.

This undermining of the purpose of the manipulated law is a feature of lawfare that occurs beyond humanitarian law. For example, when international civil law is leveraged to draw a court into political matters outside of its intended trade treaty framework, that court strays beyond its legal authority. Consequently, its mandate is seen as politicized, undermining its own integrity as a fair and neutral arbiter.

INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNALS

In the 21st century, the major battleground for ideological attacks on Israel is now within international judicial institutions, such as the International Criminal Court⁸. Due to globalization, international regulatory and dispute resolution systems have proliferated. The pervasiveness of interstate laws and

institutions offers multiple opportunities for lawfare. If courts can be tempted into political disputes, they offer multiple and excellent quality opportunities for ideological gain.

Many judges on international tribunals seize opportunities to decide lawfare cases. Those who have spent a lifetime analyzing and articulating the law are disinclined to surrender an opportunity to actually apply it. The universal human will to power is shared by ambitious judges and motivates them to have an immediate impact in the world. Among international law practitioners, it is a truism that contemporary tribunals never decline jurisdiction over a case. They instead compete for them. Moreover, judges carry authority and their decisions articulate law. When faced with situations where the technical rules are poorly defined and the situation highly political, judges act with pragmatism, which typically requires serving the political master. Breach of judicial rulings can be characterized as lawbreaking. Lawfare is a winning strategy.

Unfortunately, this has negative consequences for the rule of law and for respect for judicial institutions. Judges accepting jurisdiction over nonjusticiable international security matters undermine the proper purpose of the laws that they apply. In the long term, they undermine respect for the broader rule of law. Ultimately, their own court will be repeatedly misused and they become complicit in its abuse.

THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

The UN's highest judicial institution, the International Court of Justice in the Hague (ICJ), can be relied upon to serve the UN General Assembly (UNGA) pragmatically, subordinating its own independence. Its misuse of its advisory jurisdiction for lawfare undermines the rule of international law, a perverse outcome. On 8 December 2003, the UNGA requested the ICI to provide advice

on the illegality of the wall and fence that Israel was building along and within the West Bank/Judea and Samaria. On 9 July 2004,

the Court obliged by issuing an Advisory Opinion that condemned the security barrier as a violation of international law. In the process, the Court gratuitously stated that the establishment of Israeli settlements in East Ierusalem and the West Bank violates international law. That statement has since been used universally to justify the assertion that it is illegal for Israelis to live outside the Green Line - an assertion that the law does not justify.

South Africa
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racist apartheid
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eliminate

the Palestinians

Having already obliged once, the ICI was inevitably called upon again by the UNGA9, on 9 January 2023, to advise on the 'ongoing violation by Israel of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, from its prolonged occupation, settlement and annexation of the Palestinian territory occupied since 1067, including measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, and from its adoption of related discriminatory legislation and measures' as well as to give advice as to how these Israeli practices 'affect the legal status of the occupation'and advice as to what are the 'legal consequences that arise for third parties from this status'.

It is apparent that the UNGA had already characterized the matters on which it requested advice as illegal violations. These allegations are clearly political questions inappropriately laid before a court of law, where they should be non-justiciable: self-determination, demographic change, holy cities, self-defense, disputed territory, occupation

and so forth. Furthermore. the UNGA is aiming for sanctions to be imposed by UN ('third members rather parties', than by the Security Council, as in 2003-4), in the form of diplomatic, trade and investment boycotts.

The Palestinian political leadership (ie. the PLO) is promoting and pushing this process. It is part of their well-known strategy (for the past decades) to utilize the interna-

tional institutions in order to avoid negotiations, and achieve a Palestinian State without conditions. This is problematic because it ignores/overrides Israel's legitimate security concerns, as well as Israel's legitimate claims to sovereignty over the 'occupied' territories.

The UNGA resolution requesting the Court to give an opinion was adopted by a minority of UN member states (only 88 states voted in favor of the resolution, and many states opposed it). Most of the 55 countries and non-governmental organizations (Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, League of Arab States and African Union) who are participating in the legal proceedings in the Hague deny that the Jewish State of Israel is a legitimate UN member state.

'GENOCIDE'

A perfect example of lawfare is the case brought by South Africa against Israel in

2023 under the Genocide Convention. South Africa claims 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. Genocide is the killing of members of a group with the intention of destroying that group. At the heart of the concept is the intent 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.

Israel argues that it is 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 a tragic but inevitable consequence of the war that Hamas started, and Israel never wanted.

On 26th 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 7th 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 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 obtaining 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 7th 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. But 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 ICI 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.

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' (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 dis-

According to Barak, the Court's decision that

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

Inexplicably,

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ignored

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amount

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provided

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and hospitals.

Inexplicably, the Court vided to the Court of its efforts to minimize civilian

By stating that it is 'plausible' that Israel is committing genocide, the Court is allow-

ing international law to be politicized. South

it is 'plausible' that Israel intends to destroy not just Hamas, but the 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 7th October.

> way to minimize civilian casualties. It ignores the fact that this is highly complex and

difficult urban war, in which Hamas has a deliberate strategy of embedding its combattants in civilian places like schools, mosques

ignored that huge amount of evidence that Israel had procivilian casualties, and of Hamas' strategy of maximizing casualties.

Africa clearly used the Genocide Conven-

Hamas is a

proxy of Iran.

and shares

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people in

Palestine

Palestinians' political cause, and to support the campaign of Hamas. Its selective and politicized weaponization of the Genocide Convention against Israel is diverting the attention of the world from the fact of 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

tion to advance the

Iran's intent to eliminate the Jewish people in Palestine. As its 1088 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.

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 recognized this and dismissed South Africa's claims.

OTHER LEGAL BATTLESPACES

There are many other legal battle spaces where lawfare against the idea of Israel is waged. At the international level, these include the Human Rights Council (UNHRC), World Health Organisation, UN Committee on the Status of Women, African Union, and

European Union. Innumerable more battles occur in judicial institutions at national levels.

In the UN the largest sectoral voting bloc is the 56-member Organisation for Islamic Cooperation¹⁰, which has systematically mobilized over 40 other (mainly oil-dependent, undemocratic, or regional neighbour) states in lawfare against Israel to form a majority of votes for resolutions that condemn Israel 125 times, 79% of such country-focused resolutions. In the UNHRC11.

Israel's human rights performance has been condemned 99 times, (out of 154 resolutions, more than China, Congo, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Russia, Syria, Sudan, and Venezuela combined) and a UNHRC special permanent agenda item is the only one to critique a single country - Israel - which is inexplicable within human rights parameters.

As President of the Palestinian Authority and Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Mahmoud Abbas, stated in 201112: 'Palestine's admission to the United Nations would pave the way for the internationalization of the conflict as a legal matter, not only a political one. It would also pave the way for us to pursue claims against Israel at the United Nations, human rights treaty bodies and the International Court of Justice.'

Palestine has since been admitted as an UN observer state, donors have provided hundreds of millions of dollars in legal training and resources, hundreds of lawyers have been engaged to combat Israel in international legal institutions, and their efforts continue to intensify and expand. They challenge not only Israeli activities in the West Bank/ Judaea and Samaria but also the existence of a Jewish state.

EQUIPPING DEFENDERS

The Israeli ministries of justice, foreign affairs and strategic affairs seem recently to regard these challenges with increasing seriousness. However, the legal defence of the legitimacy of the idea of a Jewish state is three decades behind the lawfare waged against it, in terms of capability, coordination, strategy, and personnel. How should Israelis, Jews or Zionists respond to the challenges of lawfare against Israel in international institutions?

There are many ways: diplomatic/non-governmental, Israeli/diasporic, defensive/proactive, strategic/ad hoc, local/international, individual/collective. Zionist non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with a legal advocacy focus have grown in various directions. Alliances are being formed.

An unusual example of emerging defenders on

the legal playing field is *The Hague Initiative* for International Cooperation (thinc)¹³. It is a European-based Zionist think tank, focused on international legal research and education seeking justice for Israel, and it occupies a unique niche, by engaging in outreach into the Christian world. Its global network of international law academics, practitioners and experts in related disciplines engage in research, education and action to challenge the delegitimization of Israel and to advocate instead for peace and security between Israel and her neighbours.

BETTER USE OF LAW

Lawfare

cannot destroy

the idea of

Jewish

determination

Ideological attacks against Israel are usually successful and they do cause harm. They have negative impacts in the areas of psychological solidarity and morale, trade supply and logistics, and in Israel's international influence. The hostility of opponents is reinforced by delegitimizing of Israel.

Nevertheless, these inflicted harms are wanton. Lawfare cannot destroy the idea of Jewish self-determination. It cannot negate the renaissance of Jews desiring to live freely in their ancestral homeland. Delegitimizing pronouncements by international judges will not make Jews run away.

Perhaps the gravest harm caused by the misuse of international law is that it undermines the rule of law and the integrity of international legal institutions.

Ultimately, lawfare against Israel undermines the political and legal integrity of the nations that use such lawfare or acquiesce in its use. Our political leaders should be encouraged to use internation-

al law in a positive way, by seeking peaceful approaches to Palestinian self-determination that also respect Israel's legitimate rights and interests – including its right to exist as a sovereign nation within secure borders and freedom from violence and threats of force.

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http://www.thinc.info/

NOTES

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