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INTERNATIONAL

Understanding Israel and world events from a Biblical perspective

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People at 'Hostage Square' in Tel Aviv, calling for the release of the hostages still held by Hamas, 15 November 2025. | Photo: Avshalom Sassoni/Flash90

Hostages Home—But Will Peace Follow?

US President Trump and Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu announced on 29 September the closest thing to a realistic peace plan we have seen in the last two years. The proposal looked like a win-win for both Israel and the Palestinians. All Israeli hostages were to be released. Gaza would be deradicalised. Hamas would have no role in Gaza's future governance and would be disarmed. Israel would gradually withdraw from all of Gaza (except a buffer zone), and regional Arab and international forces would act as peacekeepers to ensure reform of the Palestinian Authority and facilitate reconstruction of Gaza.

The plan was supported by a wide group of regional and international nations, including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt, and Jordan—even Pakistan and Turkey. By late-November, all living hostages and the bodies of those who had been killed were returned to Israel—with

the exception of two: Israeli Ran Gvili, and Sudthisak Rinthalak, an agricultural worker from Thailand who had been employed at Kibbutz Be'eri.

On 18 November, the Trump-sponsored peace plan was approved in a Security Council resolution, giving UN authority to the establishment of an international force in Gaza.

The plan faces huge obstacles. Hamas not only refuses to hand over its weapons, it has launched a brutal campaign to reassert its control over the parts of the Strip it holds, including the heart of Gaza City. Moderate Sunni Arab states such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE refuse to contribute to an international coalition unless Hamas is already disarmed and a path to Palestinian statehood is agreed on with the Palestinian Authority in charge. Israel strongly opposes the establishment of a Palestinian state under the PA.

Moreover, the involvement of Turkey and Qatar is problematic. These regimes have always been on the side of the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist terror groups such as Hamas.

A fragile cease-fire is in place. Israel currently retains control of some 53% of Gaza, in the north, south and east, splitting the territory into two areas. Israel continues to eliminate Hamas's remaining fighters and destroy the tunnels in the area under its control.

For real peace we will have to wait. In *Chapter 6:14*, *Jeremiah* said: "They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. 'Peace, peace,' they say, when there is no peace." Peace will only come when Jerusalem has been restored, the Messiah comes, and the word of the Lord will go forth from Zion. Then—and only then—will the nations train for war no more.

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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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Israel at a Crossroads

■ Andrew Tucker

International Editor | Christians for Israel

This edition of *Israel & Christians Today* is being published at a critical moment in Israel's history. Finally, after two agonising years, almost all of the hostages taken on the terrible day of 7 October 2023 have been returned to their loved ones. These included the bodies of men, women and children who were killed and whose bodies were brutally taken into Gaza to serve as bargaining chips in Hamas' cynical war of terror.

The bodies also included that of Hadar Goldin, a young Israeli soldier who was abducted and killed eleven years ago. For all those years, his family have pleaded with the world to force Hamas to release his body—without avail, until now.

On 18 November the UN Security Council adopted a resolution implementing the so-called Comprehensive Peace Plan that was brokered by the United States in the previous months, and which laid the foundation for the release of the hostages. This plan, and the resolution, envisage the demilitarisation of Hamas, the establishment of a new government, and the gradual rebuilding of Gaza. While impressive on paper, the plan is already proving to be unrealistic. The tragic fact is that Hamas has no intention to give up its weapons, to be demilitarised or to abandon its Islamist charter, which sees the Jewish people as pigs and requires the use of violence to destroy the Jewish nation.

President Trump's vision of peace in the region through Abraham Accords may potentially achieve a kind of ceasefire—a temporary cessation of hostilities. But it will not bring peace, because it fails to address the root cause of the conflict: Islamist rejection of the existence of a sovereign Jewish nation with Jerusalem



Some of the Christians for Israel family from around the world. | Photo: Ian Worby, C4I Australia

as its capital. The conflict is an existential one, that cannot be resolved through clever agreements based on self-interest of the parties.

At the end of the day, Israel and the Jewish people will stand alone, to fight against the forces of evil. And by the grace of God they will endure.

In the meantime, our calling as Gentile Christians around the world is to stand side-by-side with the Jewish people, and to accompany them on their difficult journey home—just as the Moabite Ruth accompanied her Jewish mother-in-law Naomi from Bethlehem to Jerusalem. Like Ruth, we declare, “Your God is our God; where you die we will die”.

By the time you read this newspaper, over 20 young people from 11 countries will have returned to their home countries after participating in the inaugural Christians for Israel *Voices for Israel* international youth tour—a project we have been excited about for some time now. The programme was initiated and implemented by the C4I International team, together with our national affiliates and in partnership with the Israeli government. Over ten days, this group toured the country, met

and spoke with a wide range of people and organisations, to catch a sense of the miracle that is the State of Israel. They have returned home inspired and equipped to be ambassadors for the Jewish people and Israel in their nations. This inaugural programme will hopefully set the standard for many more such tours to come.

Just prior to the *Voices of Israel* programme, almost one hundred Christians for Israel leaders from over 25 nations came together in Jerusalem for the C4I International Forum. The countries represented included: Germany, Austria, Italy, Belgium, Denmark, Hungary, Ukraine, Ivory Coast, Netherlands, United States, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Mongolia, Korea, Australia, New Zealand, and last, but definitely not least, Fiji. In what felt like a family reunion, these representatives of the nations shared experiences and knowledge. As they travelled the country they were able, not only to learn more about the joys and pain, but also to bless the people of Israel. You can read more about this event on page 8.

Prayer Points

Looking Forward to the Light

- From December 14–22, the Jewish people celebrate *Hanukkah*, the festival of light overcoming darkness. Give thanks that during this season, all living hostages have been reunited with their families. Pray for a blessed *Hanukkah* for the entire Jewish people.
- “When anxiety was great within me, Your consolation brought me joy” (*Psalms 94:19*). Pray for Israelis who feel the renewed pain of loss during the *Hanukkah* celebrations. Ask that they experience God as the Comforter of all who mourn.
- During Advent, we celebrate *Messiah's* first coming and reflect on our longing for His return. Pray for Jesus to come soon and take His place on the throne of His father David.

Israel

- Although there is a ceasefire at present, the war has left deep scars on Israeli society. Many residents of the attacked *kibbutzim* are unsure whether to return

home. Pray for wisdom in their decisions and for healing from trauma.

- “I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that My salvation may reach to the ends of the earth” (*Isaiah 49:6*). Pray that the nations will once again see Israel as a sign of hope. Pray that people's eyes will be opened to God's plan with Israel and how He continues to carry out His plan despite everything.
- Pray for Israel's protection in the legal arena—that decisions by the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court will not harm Israel, and that these institutions will become less anti-Israel.

Christians for Israel

- Pray that Christians gain deeper insight into the spiritual battle surrounding Israel. Pray that they recognise the reality of the kingdom of darkness seeking to destroy God's people, and understand the vital role of prayer as a weapon against it.

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

Building for a Nonexistent Force

■ Yaakov Lappin

JNS

The United States is planning to establish a large, \$500 million military base in Israel near the Gaza border, intended to house an international force tasked with monitoring the fragile ceasefire, according to a report published jointly by *Ynet* and the *Shomrim* website.

However, this plan is emerging amid a total deadlock in negotiations over the next phase of the truce, known as stage two, as Washington seeks to put together a tangible International Stabilisation Force (ISF) for the stated mission of disarming Hamas in the parts of Gaza that the terrorist organisation still controls.

This impasse has, according to a *Channel 13* report, led the US to suggest moving directly to reconstruction stages in the parts of Gaza that Israel controls (53%), a proposal Israel has reportedly rejected. Meanwhile, with no one to stop it, Hamas has begun significantly re-entrenching itself in the 47% of Gaza it controls, setting up checkpoints and collecting taxes, while also collecting unexploded IDF ammunition for its rearmament effort.

Gaza Base Not Strategic

Blaise Misztal, the vice president for policy at the Washington DC-based Jewish Institute for National Security of America, told *JNS*: “The United States should absolutely have a base in Israel. But it should be an air base aimed at giving US forces greater freedom of action and easier access to multiple theaters in the Middle East, Europe, and Africa than they get from any of their current bases in Arab states.

“Such a US base makes sense both because of the strategic benefit to both Israel and the United States and—since a suitable base already exists and wouldn’t have to be built—the low cost.”

Misztal contrasted that strategic concept with the current Gaza-centric plan, which he argued misses a fundamental problem. “Constructing a massive, expensive base for the purpose of administering the Gaza ceasefire, on the other hand, makes much less strategic sense, at least right now,” he cautioned.

While the United States is right to focus on the need to secure the Gaza Strip, he added, unless Hamas is disarmed and Gaza is demilitarised, “as President Trump’s 20-point peace plan calls for, there can be no peace. Each day that goes by without demilitarisation, Hamas grows stronger and bolder.”

The core issue, Misztal explained, is “the lack of clarity—and good candidates—for troops that would make up the ISF and



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio visits a US military base in Kiryat Gat, 24 October 2025. | Photo: POOL

undertake the dangerous mission of disarming Hamas.”

That absence of an ISF is unrelated to the issue of a base, and entirely related to the fact that such a force, “to fulfill its mandate, would almost certainly have to engage in hostilities with the terrorists, take losses, and cause civilian casualties. No country, other than Israel, is willing to sign up for that,” he said.

Unless a realistic template for an ISF is formed, noted Misztal, “building bases for a non-existent force appears to be an exercise in keeping the ceasefire on life support rather than seriously grappling with the difficulties of implementing its second phase.”

Committed to Ensuring the Quiet

Lt Col (res) Dr. Shaul Bartal, who served extensively in various security capacities in Judea and Samaria and who is a senior research fellow at the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies at Bar-Ilan University, argued that a US base in Israel is not inherently negative.

Bartal told *JNS* that the base should be viewed through the lens of US global power competition, not just the local Gaza ceasefire.

“The current American interest in establishing a large base in Israel is intended, among other things, to strengthen the American presence in the Middle East against the tendency of some Arab countries to get closer to China, which is considered a threat to American hegemony in this region as well. This is even before we have talked about Israel. In this context, one can also understand the proximity between Trump and Syria and the attempt to harness the new Syria under American protection,” said Bartal.

From this perspective, Bartal noted, the

base offers potential advantages for Israel, both in terms of security and economics. He added that “a large American base will help Israel ensure the ceasefire agreement signed vis-à-vis Hamas through Egyptian-Qatari mediation. Supervised international force involvement in the Gaza Strip will help stabilise the situation in the Strip in two ways. On the one hand, it will increase deterrence against Hamas.

“Hamas will hesitate greatly to launch further attacks when there is a large American base on the border of the Strip, and the Americans are committed to ensuring the quiet. Also, a multinational force that is not Israeli will be able to operate more freely inside the Strip as it is defined according to the Trump plan that Israel agreed to—as a peacekeeping force.”

However, Bartal warned that this presence could come at a steep price for Israel’s sovereignty and freedom of action. At the time, he added, the IDF would “continue to be responsible for securing borders and communities. But the issue of humanitarian assistance and managing the Strip’s crossings—this would be done in coordination vis-à-vis the Americans.”

On Sunday, Defense Minister Israel Katz said, “Gaza will be demilitarised down to the last tunnel and Hamas will be disarmed on the yellow side (the Israeli-controlled part of Gaza) by the IDF and in the old Gaza by an international force—or by the IDF.”

The comment appears to suggest that Israel is determined to implement the removal of Hamas’s armed capabilities if or when the ISF fails to do so on the Hamas-controlled side of Gaza.

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Short News

Hadar Goldin Buried in Israel



Israel Defense Forces Lt. Hadar Goldin was laid to rest in Kfar Saba on 11 November 2025, more than 4,000 days after he was killed during Operation Protective Edge in 2014. Thousands attended the funeral, held two days after Hamas returned his remains as part of a US-brokered truce. Goldin was killed on 1 August 2014, just two hours after a ceasefire began. “Hadar, you gave far beyond measure for your country. We continue to discover rays of light you left behind after your passing,” said IDF Chief of Staff Lt Gen Eyal Zamir at the funeral. “You have returned to the land for which you fought, but we will go back to every place where a promise remains unfulfilled, and we will keep working until the last of our sons returns home.” | Photo: Flashgo

Groundbreaking Research

Israeli archaeologists have developed a groundbreaking technology to make hidden spaces visible under archaeological sites. The detection system works like a kind of X-ray and enables mapping of underground structures so that archaeologists don’t have to start digging haphazardly. These hidden spaces are frequently found in Israel.

Families in Crisis



A new post-war report shows the toll reserve duty takes on families: 50% of reservists’ wives say their husbands’ absence has caused marital difficulties. Thirty percent considered divorce, and nearly seventy percent sought psychological help after 7 October 2023. The absence of their father also greatly affected the mental situation of the children: fifty two percent of the families noticed a deterioration of the mental health of the children. | Photo: Flashgo

The Mainstreaming of Jew-Hatred

■ **Melanie Philips**

JNS

In both America and Britain, a disturbing restructuring of politics is underway that appallingly hinges on the demonisation of Israel and the loathing of the Jews. The way this animus has been deforming liberal and left-wing politics has long been obvious.

New York has elected a radical mayor, Zohran Mamdani, an obsessive Israel-hater who promotes the extreme left agenda of the Democratic Socialists of America.

The Democratic Party has increasingly been turning against Israel. Its 'squad' of radical Israel-bashers was mirrored in Britain by Jeremy Corbyn, the hard-left 'friend' of terrorists who was ousted as leader of the Labour Party because of his extremist views.

Although more centrist, the current Labour government in the UK under Sir Keir Starmer has been unprecedentedly hostile to Israel, too, as well as pursuing ruinous left-wing policies.

The forces of conservatism are desperately needed to fight all this. But conservatism is having a crisis of its own.

In America, there's an escalating civil war over the mindset promoted by the immensely influential podcaster Tucker Carlson, the former cable-TV host at Fox News. He regularly platforms Holocaust deniers, fascism apologists and antisemites like the white supremacist, pro-Nazi, pro-Stalin freak Nick Fuentes. The conservative Heritage Foundation is in turmoil over these views. President Kevin Roberts defended Carlson and Christians' right to 'critique' Israel, but also suggested Israel pressures Washington via the 'globalist class'—a coded reference to hidden Jewish power and a classic antisemitic trope.

US Vice President JD Vance has also left uncomfortable questions hanging air. At a Turning Point USA rally, he failed to rebut antisemitic suggestions, including a claim that the Jews had persecuted the Christians, and implied that Israel had somehow controlled American presidents other than Donald Trump.

These attitudes are widespread. Conspiracy theories about a 'great replacement,' Hitler being right, and Jews dragging the US into Middle East wars are now common, especially among young 'Zoomers' in influential circles.

Rod Dreher, an American conservative writer and editor living in Hungary, says Beltway insiders have told him that between 30% and 40% of the Zoomers who work in political Washington, DC, are fans of Fuentes.

On my recent visits to America, I was



Crowds at London's 2024 'March Against Antisemitism'. | Photo: Michael Lee/Campaign Against Antisemitism.

told that this rise of 'radical populism' had developed from a constellation of resentments harbored by young white people, particularly young men. With many of them left behind economically and unable to afford a house, they have been discriminated against through diversity and equality laws.

The resentment is being further driven by 'father hunger,' the fact that so many of these young men have been brought up without a committed dad. There's also huge fury at those seen to have dragged the United States into catastrophic wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

With liberal ideologues denouncing America for its original sin of 'whiteness,' what has developed on this wing of MAGA is a kind of populist ethno-nationalism wrapped up with strident misogyny and antisemitism.

The thought bubble in these circles runs like this: the postwar liberal settlement has failed; the liberal West brought down Hitler; Hitler should have won.

This parallels the scarcely less breathtakingly dumb syllogism on the left, which goes like this: the Western nation state creates nationalism; nationalism created Hitler; get rid of the nation, and you'll get no more Hitler.

Those who feel overwhelmed by developments that seem to threaten their whole world generally develop conspiracy theories and fixate upon scapegoats—a process that invariably leads straight to the Jews.

Conservative Zoomers thus blame Jewish 'neocons' for the war in Iraq. This is absurd, since the principal administration figures who took the United States into that war were non-Jews, while Israel actually opposed it on the basis that the real threat wasn't Iraq but Iran.

These radical populists also single out liberal Jews for causing the collapse of

the West through race and gender identity politics. Liberal Jews can be criticised, of course, for subscribing to such socially destructive opinions.

However, blaming them for a politically mainstream worldview pushed mostly by gentiles, despite the fact that some of the most prominent opponents of these policies have been neo-conservative Jews, is to tumble down the Jewish conspiracy rabbit hole.

Among the ethno-nationalists, there are also disturbing echoes of the Christian antisemitism that poisoned Europe for centuries. The view that Christian Zionism is a modern heresy is gaining traction among Protestants and Catholics alike, putting into reverse the hitherto ironclad support for Israel by America based upon the reverence for Hebrew scripture among evangelical Christians.

This has produced a troubling convergence: the left blames Jews for capitalism, the right for liberalism and rejecting Jesus's divinity, and Islamists for the world's evils. Left, right and Islamists are now united by this hostility—an alarming trend with potentially seismic political consequences.

America's Democrats and Britain's Corbynite hard-left both turn off mainstream voters who reject their extremism. In parallel, if the Republicans are identified with white-nationalist conspiracy theorists, they will also lose great swathes of the public.

However, these extremes of both left and right now have significant and growing traction. In Britain, Corbyn's hard-left, the ultra-left Greens and the Islamists represent a huge body of feeling that is anti-Israel and anti-West. Competing with Labour for the same constituency, they will all damage each other. In theory, that would benefit the conservative side of politics. But that

grouping is itself divided between the populist insurgency Reform and the Conservative party.

The likely outcome, said the astute political philosopher John Gray in London this week, will be a seven-party split. Reform may emerge as the biggest party in this fragmented chaos, but radical leftists and Islamists will be greatly empowered.

In America, said Gray, after Trump leaves office, the forces of ethno-nationalist radical populism are likely to become even stronger.

At the same time, Mamdani has laid down a blueprint for a merging of radical progressivism and Islamism. That alliance of extremes will damage Democrats and benefit Republicans. But if Republicans are divided between mainstream conservatives and radical populists, they will destroy themselves.

More balefully still, this Zoomer generation—having never been taught the history of the worst that humanity has done to itself—is so profoundly alienated from a liberal democratic culture they believe has badly failed and comprehensively lied about it that they see nothing wrong with authoritarianism and fascism.

The political consensus over reason and morality disintegrated when the left adopted Palestinianism as its cause of causes and turned exterminatory Jew-hatred into a badge of conscience.

That, in turn, lifted the constraints against antisemitism that had previously existed on the right. Antisemitism has exploded on the right because the left gave it permission. In other words, the old guardrails against Jew-hatred have disappeared.

Ideological capture—silencing challenges to Palestinianism, identity politics and other 'progressive' dogmas—has sealed much of the left into a closed thought system. The right, meanwhile, has similarly retreated from rationality and truth.

Gray says that if politicians continue to fail and thus alienate the public still further, the West could be looking at the rise of real fascism or authoritarianism within a decade. None of this portends well for the Jews of America and Britain.

The way to respond is to fight like hell: to fight to destroy the progressive ideologies that have hollowed out Western civilisation; to fight to turn back the tide of Islamisation; and to fight to reconnect Christianity to its Jewish parent by affirming, promoting and celebrating the historic, biblically based identity and culture of America and the West.

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Syria-US: Change or Deception?

■ Yochanan Visser

Correspondent in Israel

In early November a historic meeting took place in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington between US President Donald Trump and the new Syrian president, Ahmed al-Shaara. Historic because it was the first time since the Assad dynasty ruled Syria for the past 60 years that a Syrian president had met with his American counterpart in the White House. But also historic because until less than a year ago, the United States still treated al-Shaara as a dangerous al-Qaeda terrorist and had a \$10 million bounty on his head.

The question now is what was behind this meeting and who changed their previous positions over the past year. Trump has a vested interest in ensuring that his agenda of peace for the Middle East is followed, and the new situation in Syria, offers the US government opportunities to bring the country under its sphere of influence. Trump has clearly changed his stance on al-Shaara's past and even brought the Syrian leader a gift: a bottle of perfume.

With that bottle of perfume, Trump demonstrated his complete lack of understanding of Arab culture when he sprayed al-Shaara's ears without asking. However, the Syrian leader was visibly embarrassed when Trump asked if he had multiple wives after he suggested giving another bottle of perfume to his wife.

This marked the beginning of an otherwise positive, unique meeting that resulted in the temporary suspension of US sanctions on Syria for six months.

Al-Shaara had an interest in this meeting because Syria urgently needs aid to rebuild the war-ravaged country and is clearly making efforts to gain the support of Western countries, led by America. Now that Syria has broken away from the Iranian- and Russian-led pro-Assad coalition and is seeking rapprochement with moderate Arab countries and the West, the Syrian president clearly sees new opportunities. His attempts are hampered, however, by skepticism about his past as an al-Qaeda leader and his short-lived relationship with ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

Ties to ISIS and Al-Qaeda

Al-Shaara clearly refused to discuss his al-Qaeda past, as several media interviews he gave after his meeting with Trump revealed, but he did discuss his decision to join the anti-ISIS coalition. According to the Syrian leader, he had previously had several confrontations with ISIS in his capacity as commander of the al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra in Syria and later as the leader of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). However he did not mention that ISIS



Syria's President Ahmed al-Sharaa at the UN headquarters in New York City, September 2025. | Photo: Flash90

attempted to assassinate him twice after he became president of Syria, primarily because of his attempts to seek rapprochement with the West and moderate Arab states.

ISIS has tried to recruit extreme elements of Syria's government to join their cells, citing al-Shaara's connections with the international coalition against ISIS since 2016. Al-Shaara's forces responded with a major operation in November, arresting 71 of the *Jihadist* movement.

When asked about his al-Qaeda past by major American media outlets, al-Shaara typically dodged questions or gave vague answers. He initially downplayed the 9/11 attacks, claiming he was too young to be involved. However, in 2021, he was much clearer about 9/11, saying: "Anyone in the Islamic world who claimed they weren't happy about the attack was lying."

During his Washington visit, al-Shaara defended his record, claiming he only protected his country. Yet his brief presidency saw massacres of Alawites, Christians and Druze, along with harsh crackdowns in major cities.

Relations with Israel?

Al-Shaara's responses to media questions about relations with Israel and possible Syrian participation in the so-called Abraham Peace Accords between Israel and Islamic countries were clearer.

He ruled out a relationship with Israel at this time but was willing to discuss with Jerusalem a renewed security agreement with the Jewish state and the IDF's withdrawal from strategically important locations in Syria along the Israeli border, as well as the return of the Golan Heights, which had belonged to Syria for only 19 years.

In Israel, al-Shaara's visit to Washington was closely watched, and questions were raised about the new Syrian president's

true intentions, given his past.

The Past of Ahmed al-Shaara

The new Syrian leader changed his nom de guerre after the fall of the Assad regime in early December 2024. Abu Mohammed al-Julani was changed to the name he was given at birth: Ahmed al-Shaara. This seemed to give the impression that he had assumed a new identity now that he was president of the Arab Republic.

The move, however, seemed familiar to some observers and journalists. Al-Shaara had a reputation for being a 'chameleon' in changing political and military circumstances.

Nicolas Pelham of *The Economist* described how al-Sharaa was arrested by Assad's Mukhabarat intelligence agency in Damascus before the US invasion of Iraq that led to the fall of dictator Saddam Hussein, but convinced them he was among the *jihadists* seeking to overthrow Assad and was released. Later, arrested by American forces in Iraq, he convinced interrogators he was Iraqi. Imprisoned for planting explosives, he met Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who gave him \$50,000 to set up an ISIS branch. Al-Sharaa used it to form his own Al-Qaeda affiliate, Jabhat al-Nusra.

Al-Sharaa's past doesn't seem to bother Trump, who seems to agree with the new star in the Syrian firmament that only the future matters.

In Israel, however, they haven't forgotten that Hamas was treated the same way when the terrorist movement won the first Palestinian elections. Hamas was supposed to become more moderate due to its responsibility for governing the territories allocated to the Palestinian Authority under the Oslo Accords.

Since 7 October 2023, we know where these kinds of illusionary ideas can lead.

Short News

5 Million Holocaust Names' Recovered



Yad Vashem announced in November it recovered the names of five million Jews killed in the Holocaust—"a life that mattered," said chairman Dani Dayan. Using AI, researchers hope to find another 250,000 names, though about one million may stay unknown. The project restores individuality to victims and warns against rising antisemitism that seeks both Jewish lives and the destruction of their state. | Photo: Flashgo.

Nuclear Deal Ends

The ten-year-old nuclear deal with Iran expired in October. Under the 2015 agreement, sanctions were lifted in exchange for limits on Iran's nuclear programme. Iran now says it is no longer bound by the deal, prompting the UN to reinstate pre-2015 sanctions (snapback mechanism of sanctions against Iran).

Access Blocked

Microsoft has recently blocked access to a number of its services for the Israeli IDF. According to Microsoft the IDF violated Microsoft's service agreements by recording numerous mobile telephone conversations of Palestinians in Judea and Samaria and in Gaza. The IDF backed up its data to make sure that no information was lost.

Billions of Damage



The reconstruction of Gaza could cost well over 120 billion US dollars. Hamas claims that 70 billion US dollars are needed for damage repair to important sectors, while the Central Bank estimates that 53 billion US dollars are needed for reconstruction. Furthermore, experts predict that ten to fifteen years are needed to clear all the rubble, including all non-exploded ammunition. The costs for this are estimated at 1.2 billion US dollars. In total sixty per cent of the houses in Gaza are destroyed. | Photo: Flashgo.



Home at Last—13 October 2025

13 October was a day of immense relief and overwhelming emotion. On this day, twenty hostages, held captive by Hamas for over two years, were finally released and set foot on Israeli soil after enduring unimaginable hardships. For their families, the joy of their return was nothing short of a miracle—one that brought tears of happiness to many around the world and hope to a nation. The first verses of *Psalms 126* seemed to have been written for this day:

“When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dreamed. Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, ‘The Lord has done great things for them.’”

But even in the midst of celebration, there lingered the shadow of sorrow for the hostages who were murdered by Hamas and whose bodies are still being held. At the same time, those who have been released endured unimaginable hardships for two long years. Let us pray for their comfort and healing, and for a blessing over their lives as they begin to recover.

| Photos: Flash90



People waiting for freed hostages at the Re'im military facility in southern Israel.



Family and friends of Israeli hostage Bar Kupershtein watch his release from Hamas captivity.

Mixed Emotions

The exchange of hostages and Palestinian prisoners evokes different emotions and reactions in Israel. Three Israelis share how this impacts them.

Ruby Chen

Father of Itay Chen, whose body was held by Hamas until 4 November

“I am rejoicing for the families of the hostages who can hold their loved ones in their arms again. It was a moment of joy for many. This hostage deal for me felt like a twenty-ton hammer suddenly falling on me, because I have to face the reality of losing my son. I call on everyone to continue wearing the yellow hostage pins until all the bodies of the hostages have returned.”

Tal Hartuv

Terror Attack Survivor

“In 2010, my friend and I were attacked by a Palestinian terrorist during a hike. My friend Kristine Luken was murdered and I was seriously injured. Now my attacker has been released in exchange for the release of the hostages. These have been very difficult days for me. Israel has reneged on its promise to keep him behind bars permanently and has released this murderer. I was completely exhausted by the emotions. I found out through Google that my attacker was being released. You look up the list and then you see the terrorist's name, and it's like falling into an abyss. On the one hand, I find the hostage deal counterproductive.

On the other hand, I cannot bring myself to look the hostages and their families in the eye and say: ‘You, as hostages, will remain there.’ It is almost as if it is a choice between who will live and who will die. I think Netanyahu had no choice but to accept this deal.”

Anat Schneider

Journalist, Israel Today

“The return of the hostages is an immeasurable joy that is almost impossible to comprehend. The people of Israel can finally breathe again. All of us know that not only have our children returned home today, but a part of our hearts has begun to beat again. Now we can focus on healing and brotherhood. We can rise again and start anew.”



Ruby Chen.



Thousands gathered at Hostage Square in Tel Aviv to celebrate the return of the hostages.



Released hostage Evyatar David arrives to Beilinson hospital.



Released hostage Bar Kupershtein arrives to Sheba Medical center.

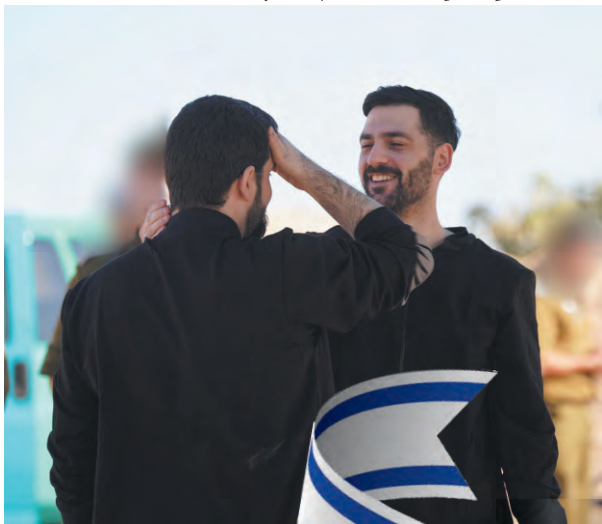
“A part of our heart has started beating again”



(Above) The family of Eitan Mor. (Below) Released hostage Avinatan Or reunites with his partner Noa Argamani. | Photo: IDF Spokesperson Unit



(Above) Released hostage Omri Miran arrives at Ichilov Hospital. (Below) Emotional reunion for the Cunio brothers, held hostage for over two years. | Photo: IDF Spokesperson Unit



Emotional moments at Hostage Square.



Donald Trump in Israel, honoured at the Knesset and (right) arriving at Ben Gurion Airport, 13 Oct 2025.



Jews and Gentiles—United in Hope!

Ninety delegates representing Christians for Israel in over 25 countries gathered in Israel for the biennial Christians for Israel (C4I) Forum from 30 October—3 November 2025. For almost thirty years, Christians for Israel has been growing around the world—planting and nourishing groups of Christians who carry the C4I mission to inform the church, pray for the peace of Jerusalem and comfort the Jewish people. Every two years, the leaders of our national and regional affiliates around the world gather in Jerusalem for a time of learning, renewing old friendships, connecting with the Jewish people, and planning for the future. Here are some impressions from the tenth Christians for Israel International Forum.

Our Common Messianic Hope

Our friend David Nekrutman (Isaiah Projects) encourages Christians to see Jesus' words in *Luke 4* as an invitation to celebrate *Shabbat*: "God doesn't want robotic faith. He wants us to freely choose His will. That is what we celebrate on *Shabbat*—we rest in God, in expectation of the *Messiah*."

In a deeply moving speech, Benjamin Philip (Hineni) encouraged us to remain focused on our task to bring Christians and Jews together in these messianic times. "The Christians for Israel mission is right in the heart of what God is doing in this world, preparing Jews and Gentiles for the coming of *Messiah*."

New C4I International Chairman

The newly appointed Chairman of C4I International is Willem Griffioen. Willem is no stranger to Christians for Israel; as a young man, he and his father helped establish C4I in the United States nearly thirty years ago. He has since served as long-time Chairman of the Israel Allies Foundation and has founded and led numerous businesses and ministries. Willem now lives in Washington DC with his wife Kathy and children. "I sense that C4I is entering a new season—God wants to do new things, and I am excited to be part of it."

Kfar Aza

On our journey to the sites of the 7 October massacre, we visited Kfar Aza, a *kibbutz* whose fields stretch to the border of the Gaza strip. The *kibbutz* was attacked early in the morning by around 250 Palestinian terrorists. They took 19 hostages. 62 residents were murdered in the most gruesome ways. Later that day the looters came. We saw the total devastation, the burnt and damaged houses. We spoke with survivors, people who in the past were dedicated to peace and coexistence with their neighbours. On 7 October they

saw the very people whom they had always worked with standing in their kitchens, looting and killing.

The New Antisemitism

According to Michal Cotler-Wunsch, until recently Israel's Special Envoy Combatting Antisemitism, the hijacking, inversion and weaponisation of the international legal system has fuelled antisemitism. It laid the foundations for the 7 October massacre, and enabled the genocidal terror of Hamas to be exonerated while Israel is demonised and delegitimised. Our shared morality has collapsed. Together, we must urgently reclaim Zionism and reject all forms of antisemitism.

Celebration of Hope

The closing event of the Forum was a reception with our Israeli friends and partners in the Train Theatre in Jerusalem, a picturesque location near the old railway station from the time of the Mandate. We celebrated the 45th anniversary of Christians for Israel's establishment in 1980. The keynote speaker was Deputy Foreign Minister Sharren Haskel, who spoke from her heart about 7 October, 2023. Having visited *kibbutz* Habbakuk on that day, she read from *Habakkuk chapter 1* and explained how this sounds to modern Hebrew ears as speaking of the catastrophe of that day. The word '*hamas*' (meaning in Hebrew: violence) appears there prominently.

Danielle Mor of the Jewish Agency thanked Christians for Israel for decades of supporting and enabling *aliyah* of Jewish people to be made to Israel. She and her colleagues spoke emotionally about the special work of Koen Carlier and his team in Ukraine, helping Israel and the Jewish people in untold ways, especially during the difficult years of the war in Ukraine.

Monique Rijkers—YouTube FaktaIsrael (Indonesia)

"It was because of C4I that, as an Indonesian Christian, I learned about Israel for the first time in 2012. After receiving a vision from God in November 2012, three weeks later C4I held a seminar on Israel in Jakarta. At that time, Rev Willem Glashouwer seemed to speak directly to me. Today, our organisation shares the truth about Israel and has millions of followers in Indonesia. Our visit to the C4I Forum 2025 was to express gratitude for the seeds sown by C4I. Servants of God everywhere—you may never know the impact of the word you sow. But believe me, God's word is never in vain!"

Edda Fogorollo—C4I Italy

"Ever since 2008, C4I International has helped me to realise my calling as a teacher of Holocaust studies.



The Forum participants visit ZAKA, search and rescue organisation. | Photo: ZAKA World



Visit to the car graveyard, a silent memorial to the victims of Hamas. | Photo: Ian Worby, C4I Australia

With your help, over the years we have built an amazing team of talented young Christians in Italy who are now organising many events—all around the country and online—to educate Christians and comfort and strengthen the Jewish people. Praise be to God!"

Ian and Mandy Worby—C4I Australia

"It was wonderful to be with our C4I international family—it felt like a true reunion! We appreciated the fellowship, teaching, and encouragement, and visiting projects to see how our support brings comfort and solidarity to our Jewish and Israeli brothers and sisters was meaningful. The geopolitical and lawfare briefings and resources to defend our beliefs were invaluable. Thank you to everyone who made the Forum a success."



Part of the Christians for Israel family from around the world. | Photo: Ian Worby, C4I Australia



Marie-Louise Weissenböck (C4I Austria), packs a rescue kit at ZAKA. | Photo: Ian Worby, C4I Australia



Anemone Rüger with Holocaust survivor and community coordinator Gita Koifman. | Photo: Ian Worby, C4I Australia



ICJ's Flawed Gaza Advisory Opinion

■ Prof Gregory Rose,
Irene Petrakis and
Michael Pushenko

On 22 October, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued its Advisory Opinion: *Obligations of Israel in relation to the Presence and Activities of the United Nations, Other International Organisations and Third States in and in relation to the Occupied Palestinian Territory*.

The Opinion is the Court's response to a request by UN General Assembly (resolution 79/232), made in December 2024, after Israel ceased cooperation with UNRWA. This followed evidence implicating UNRWA employees in supporting and aiding Hamas, including by participating in the 7 October attacks. The General Assembly asked the Court to opine on Israel's obligations under international law.

A majority of the Court's judges found that Israel's UNRWA ban is illegal and that Israel must allow UN and other aid organisations unimpeded access to Gaza.

In a separate opinion, Vice-President Judge Sebutinde argued that the ruling abused the ICJ's advisory function, lacked reliable evidence on Israel's control of Gaza, and overlooked the complexities of urban warfare and Israel's security concerns.

The Advisory Opinion

The Opinion marked the third time that the General Assembly has requested an Advisory Opinion concerning Israel, constituting an abuse of process to prosecute lawfare against Israel. As noted by Judge Sebutinde, the ICJ should refuse to give an Opinion when necessary to safeguard the integrity of its judicial role. Additionally, the Opinion prejudices two active contentious cases addressing Gaza's situation: South Africa vs Israel and Nicaragua vs Germany, which substantially overlap with the Opinion concerning the scope, content and applicability of humanitarian obligations. The ICJ heavily relied on UN reports—including from UNRWA itself—while disregarding alternative sources such as Israel and UN Watch, creating a circular evidentiary and reasoning process. It also focused solely on Israel's obligations, while disregarding the effect upon them of the



Peace Palace, Seat of the International Court of Justice at The Hague. | Photo: Shutterstock

conduct of Hamas and other actors.

ICJ Misapplied Humanitarian Law and Law of Occupation

In discussing Israel's obligations to supply humanitarian aid to Gaza, the ICJ overlooked Article 23 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Instead, it primarily focused on Israel's obligation under Article 59, which pertains to an 'occupying power'.

The duty to deliver aid under Article 23 is not absolute but can be restricted if there is a risk of diversion and advantage to the hostile army. Given Hamas' repeated diversion of aid, any restrictions imposed by Israel would have been justified.

The ICJ primarily focused on Article 59, which outlines the duties of an occupying power. However, the application of this article was problematic because the standard for 'occupation' under international law is not met. Occupation, as defined in various doctrines, including *The Law of War on Land* (1880), Article 42 of the Hague Regulations (1907), and Article 6 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, requires both military and governmental control, which Israel does not have over Gaza.

ICJ criticism of Israel's aid pause from March to May 2025 stems from unreliable evidence that insufficient aid was delivered beforehand. Israel stated that enough aid was in Gaza to feed the

population for months, meeting its Article 59 obligations.

Israel is Entitled to Cease Cooperation With UNRWA

The ICJ relied on an incomplete analysis of the legal framework for UNRWA's operations to contend that Israel's UNRWA ban contravenes the UN Charter and the 1946 Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations. In doing so, it largely disregarded a key piece of treaty law—the Comay-Micheltmore Agreement—which qualifies UNRWA's immunities and privileges and permits Israel to cease cooperation with UNRWA in the territories on security grounds.

As highlighted by Judge Sebutinde, UNRWA's privileges under the UN Charter and the Convention must also be interpreted according to the principle of 'functional necessity'. This limits privileges and immunities to what is essential for UN agencies to carry out their functions independently and effectively, consistent with UN purposes. Clearly, UNRWA's support for terrorism is not captured by this.

The ICJ Downplayed UNRWA's Support for Terrorism

The ICJ rejected evidence that UNRWA's infiltration by Hamas and other terrorist organisations is so systematic that it compromises the agency's neutrality. In effect, the court disregarded

information provided by Israel.

The ICJ portrayed the involvement of UNRWA employees in the 7 October attacks as an isolated and remediable event, while disregarding UNRWA's endemic and longstanding links to terrorism beyond 7 October. It also disregarded UNRWA's role in exacerbating the conflict since its inception, including by radicalising Palestinians through its educational programs, and perpetuating the 'right of return' narrative.

Given the above, the ICJ also failed to consider Israel's duties under international law to suppress terrorism and not to cooperate with organisations supporting terrorism, such as UNRWA.

Conclusion

The ICJ Advisory Opinion of 22 October 2025 constituted a misuse of judicial authority that subordinated the rule of international law in the UN to political necessity. It offered a flawed and incomplete assessment of Israel's obligations under humanitarian law, the law of occupation, and UNRWA's governing framework.

As shown in evidence that the majority of the ICJ bench disregarded, UNRWA is clearly a partisan actor in the conflict, has long enabled and supported terrorism, and has ceased to act as a neutral humanitarian organisation, forfeiting its right to immunities and privileges. The dissenting opinion of Judge Julia Sebutinde outlined these flaws of the majority judgment.

The majority of the Court circumvented the existing Middle East sub-regional peace negotiation framework. Rather than endorsing a return to the negotiating table, it undermined fundamental principles of international law, such as sovereign state consent and unbiased adjudication.

The ICJ must begin to restore itself by curtailing its current enthusiasm for Advisory Opinion lawfare.

Read our full analysis here: <https://thinc-israel.org/articles/obligations-of-israel-by-the-icj-analysis/>

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The Land of Israel, Jesus and India

■ Kelvin Crombie

Australian Historian | Documentor & Founder of Heritage Resources

When we hear the name of India we usually think of: its expanding economic and geo-political significance; its cricket achievements; its ancient Jewish communities; the coming of *Te'oma* (Thomas), one of the followers of *Yeshua*-Jesus, who introduced the Messianic faith there; or of the numerous Israelis who flock there following their military service and hang out in the Himalaya's or on the beaches of Goa.

There is, however, another aspect relating to India—the strategic role it played in the modern-day restoration of the Jewish people to the land of covenant promise. India was the magnet which drew Britain, the Cyrus nation, into involvement in the Middle East region.

Why was India the Magnet?

By geographical chance, India sat at the eastern end of major trade routes, sending precious goods westward for millennia. The Eastern Mediterranean became central to this economic flow, and great empires—ancient and modern—coveted the region, leading to constant conflict. The epicentre of this broader area was the land of Israel which was often a 'buffer zone' in this clash between the empires. It was 'the land between empires.'

The land of Israel was significant not only because it was promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but because it would become the setting for God's plan of worldwide redemption—the overturning of Adam and Eve's death sentence through the death and resurrection of *Yeshua* (Jesus). It was therefore the epicentre of a spiritual battle between God's Kingdom and the kingdom of darkness.

Jewish Connections to India

For millennia there had been direct Israel-India connections. It is believed that some materials for Solomon's Temple might have originated in India, and according to some local traditions Jewish people went to live in India after the destruction of the First Temple. Later the Persian Empire controlled the entire region from the land of Israel to India, as too did Alexander the Great for a short time.

There was also trade between the Roman Empire and India during the Second Temple period, and the land of Israel was no doubt involved in this dynamic. Jewish exiles then made their way to the west coast of India after the destruction of the Second Temple, arriving about 72 AD (CE). These Jewish exiles arrived shortly after the arrival there of *Te'oma* or Thomas, a Jewish follower of Jesus the *Messiah* who introduced the Messianic faith into India. Thereafter Indian people



The Taj Mahal in India. | Photo: Shutterstock

came into covenant-union with a circumcised Jew, *Yeshua*-Jesus—an Easterner just like them.

The Coming of the European Sea-faring Empires

After the Ottoman Turks captured Constantinople in 1453 they took control over the lucrative trade routes connecting the East with the West. This monopoly forced the European powers to seek alternative routes to the East, which culminated in 1498 when Vasco Da Gama of Portugal landed at Calicut on the Malabar coast of India—thereby establishing a direct link between West and East. The other European powers followed, especially the British, Dutch and French. In time the English East India Company became the most important European entity in India. Due to this new dynamic less trade now went through the Eastern Mediterranean region.

Napoleon and French Attempts to Get to India

The search for a quicker route to the East intensified. In 1665 the French made an unsuccessful proposal to the Turks, and in 1671 German philosopher Gottfried Leibniz advised Louis XIV to rebuild the ancient canal linking the Mediterranean and Red Sea, predicting Egypt as the true route to India. This plan also failed. Then in 1798 Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Egypt, as part of a broader plan which involved linking up with Tipu Sahib, the Sultan of Mysore, and ousting the British from India. The British Admiral Horatio Nelson destroyed the French fleet in Egypt, and Napoleon's subsequent invasion of Israel ended in defeat, forcing his return to France.

Although Napoleon's plan was unsuccessful British policymakers now realised the vulnerability of the region—and which was now 'a road to India.' Interestingly the French Revolution and

Napoleon's invasion also awoke interest, especially with Evangelical Christians, concerning the restoration of the Jewish people to the Israel's restoration and economics/geo-politics, would merge, and India would play a significant role in this dynamic.

The first Indian War of Independence, or the Indian Mutiny, in 1857 caused British policy-makers to further see the necessity for a quicker route to India. Then when a French consortium built the Suez Canal in 1869, British strategists realised they would need to control this vital waterway, as it was centrally located on 'the road to India.' India by now was the 'pearl' of the British Empire.

The British Government then purchased the controlling shares of the Suez Canal Company in 1875, and landed troops there in 1882, effectively taking control of Egypt. Thereafter Britain was in the commanding position on 'the road to India.' It was imperative during this period for Britain to maintain amicable relations with the Ottoman Turkish Empire, which basically controlled the east bank of the Suez Canal—the Sinai and adjacent land of Israel.

The World Wars

Matters changed in 1914 when the Ottoman Turks sided with Germany in the First World War. Troops from India were landed in Mesopotamia (Iraq), while other Indian troops lined the Suez Canal when the first ANZACS arrived there in late 1914.

Indian soldiers thereafter fought at Gallipoli, as well as in the Middle East campaign between 1916-18. Representative Indian troops were at Jerusalem for the official entrance of General Allenby on 11 December 1917, at which time Muslim soldiers from India guarded the Holy Places of Jerusalem. It was during this very period that the

British Government officially endorsed the request of the Jewish Zionist Movement for having a Jewish National Home in the land of Israel.

In 1918 Indian cavalry captured Haifa, and were heavily involved in the capture of Syria. Indian soldiers therefore played a significant role in negating the influence of Islam over the region—sufficient for the foundations of a Jewish National Home to be established in the land of Israel under British protection and with the legal endorsement of the League of Nations.

During WWII soldiers from India served in the Eastern Mediterranean region, playing an important role in stopping the German-led Axis forces from capturing Egypt and further East. This had more than military importance, as the Nazi leadership decided on 20 January 1942 to murder eleven million Jewish people, including the 700,000 or so in the Middle East. A specialised murder squad was sent to the region ready to begin this task, together with 'local collaborators'—pending a German-led victory at El Alamein.

This did not happen as the Allies were victorious at El Alamein—and amongst the thousands killed were hundreds of soldiers from India. This Allied victory stopped the Holocaust from entering into the Middle East and Indian soldiers therefore played a supporting role in preserving the Jewish community in the region and especially in the land of Israel.

Is There a 'Divine Connection'?

Perhaps the most significant role played by India after 1798 was by being the magnet which drew Britain into taking control over the land of Israel. There seems little doubt that if Britain had no imperial interests in India, then they would not have been in 'the land between empires', and they would not have been the modern-day Cyrus nation which restored Israel to its land.

When Almighty God created the earth, He knew exactly what He was doing by placing India at one end, Britain at the other end—and the land of Israel in between. It would almost seem there was 'a divine connection' between India and the land of Israel. The significance of this connection relates to the central role which Israel and the Jewish people there will play in the ultimate fulfillment of God's worldwide redemptive plan—the return of Jesus to Jerusalem.

Perhaps there might even be a prominent role still to be played by India in the outworking of this great plan of redemption?

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“I Have Called You By Name”

■ Anemone Rüger

Project Coordinator | Holocaust Survivors Ukraine

The Bible highlights three groups who receive God’s special care: orphans, widows, and strangers. Among Holocaust survivors in Ukraine, many were orphaned during the *Shoah* and are now widowed. Since the 2022 war, many have also become ‘strangers,’ fleeing the east to the Lviv region, which our staff visited in the fall.

Lviv... Lwow... Lemberg. A great city, a strange mix of Russian and Ukrainian, of Polish, Jewish and Soviet history, European architecture, and Austrian coffee house culture, when Lemberg was the northeastern outpost of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Where are the Holocaust Survivors?

We learn that only about a dozen Holocaust survivors remain in the entire region. How can that be? Before the war, 100,000 Jews lived in Lviv—then part of Poland—and another 50,000 refugees arrived after the German invasion. I’m still trying to grasp the full picture. The devastation of the Holocaust here is unmistakable, and Olga Lidovskaya, who runs the small Jewish museum at the Hesed social welfare center, helps me understand more.

The Soviet occupation of Polish western Ukraine after the Hitler–Stalin Pact in 1939 brought imprisonment and re-education camps for the city’s entire leadership. When Germany invaded two years later, those prisoners were summarily executed. Little was done to save lives in this politically suspect, newly annexed region: no factories to evacuate for the war effort, no *evakuatsia* for Jewish workers, and no remote villages to hide in.

“The young men were drafted into the Red Army, but at the next opportunity they went home again—except for the Jews, who knew what was waiting for them,” explains Olga. “After what the city had gone through at the hands of the Soviet leadership, people were not afraid of the Germans. Shortly after the occupation of the city, the Jews were forced to remove the bodies of inmates murdered by the Soviet leadership from the prisons. These images were then used to incite the population against the Jews.”

By early July 1941, when the Wehrmacht had not even advanced into most of Ukraine, 6,000 Jews had already been murdered in Lviv—by local residents. A ghetto followed in November 1941, then the murder of thousands of Jews—Yanovska within the city, or Belzec, until early 1943.

After 1945, eastern Poland became western Ukraine, and over a million Poles were deported. Jewish life in other Ukrainian cities persisted in the thousands, but Lviv had only 800 registered Jews—just 200 of them local.

Krystina? Or Natasha?

Natasha welcomes us with the utmost friendliness and leads us into her antiquated apartment. She smiles with great joy at her guests, the flowers, and the thoughtful gifts. She radiates such kindness and lightheartedness that one must assume life has always been kind to her.

“I only have photos from after the war, when I was already four,” says Natasha. “I had such eyes... here, look. I love this old photo.” When the photo was taken, Natasha was called Krystina. That was the name she was given when she was admitted to the orphanage, she tells us. Natasha is the name her adoptive parents gave her. But before that, what was before?

“I don’t know,” Natasha says, hard to believe. “I only found out about all this much later, in first grade! People



Natasha never learned her real name. Her parents were murdered in the Holocaust after she was born. | Photos: C4I

told me I was Jewish. Back then, people didn’t talk about nationality. I was friends with a blonde Ukrainian girl. Her mother told me what I know. I was born in 1941. My parents were both Jewish, that’s what this woman told me. My dad must have been a Polish Jew, a professor. Shortly after I was born, my parents must have been murdered, and I ended up in an orphanage. When I was four, I was adopted by a Russian-Tatar couple.” Natasha survived the war relatively unscathed in the orphanage.

Natasha has been searching her whole life. She didn’t dare ask her adoptive mother. Such topics were taboo in society. But later, she searched every archive she could think of with her son-in-law—laboriously and unsuccessfully.

“What is my original name? I have no idea. I don’t even know my surname. I don’t know what my parents’ names were. Can you imagine going through life like that? Not knowing who you are?”

My gaze falls on the card in my hand, handwritten by Doris for the survivors, with the scripture from *Isaiah 43*: “I have called you by name, you are mine.”

Alexey

The drive to Alexey’s place takes two hours from the regional capital of Lviv further west to near the Polish border; the Carpathian Mountains form a beautiful silhouette in the distance. The last stretch of road to the village of Vola Yakubova near Drohobych is just a dirt road. Once a week, a mobile corner shop drives through the village and supplies the residents. Here, at the opposite end of Ukraine, Alexey and his wife Anya found refuge when their hometown of Kharkiv was attacked by Russian missiles.

“If I have to cry, just ignore it,” Alexey advises us right at the start. “All the windows in our house in Kharkiv were broken during the very first attack.”

Then the Germans Came

His story begins in 1939 in a small Russian village across the border—without his grandparents. They were murdered in 1918 when the Ukrainian Haidamaks carried out a massacre of Jews in the wake of World War I. Father Abraham and his four siblings grew up as orphans. Alexey was barely born when his father went to the front.

“I can remember most of it clearly,” says Alexey. “First came the Romanians, then the Hungarians, then the Czechs, and then the Germans.” From then on, at the latest, he lived in constant danger. “I spent most of my time with my grandmother. My mother had to dig trenches. It was war, after all; she was hardly ever at home. When there were raids, Grandma hid me under



Alexey’s life is a series of misfortunes. He is overwhelmed by the fact that this visit is so different from what he expected.

her skirt. I had to sit in the basement for a year when it got too dangerous. I got very sick.”

But how did they survive? Did no one betray them? Was a ghetto set up in the village? “How should I know, I was four years old when the war ended. There were Jews everywhere. When they hanged Yasha—was he a Jew? I have no idea, but it’s quite possible. They were rampaging everywhere.” Alexey is fighting back tears the whole time.

“That’s where I learned German as a little boy, from the Germans. When we fled to Austria two years ago, I understood a lot. And now you’re here. Just ask, I’ll tell you everything. I’ve been waiting for you for 80 years.”

Grown Up At 12

At 12, Alexey’s childhood was over—he was sent to the Donbass to work in the mines.

“What else could I do?” Alexey exclaims. “I had to learn somewhere. My parents? I only saw them during the holidays. That’s it. I won’t say any more.”

Our contact had warned us not to ask about the children. When Alexey recites a poem he wrote himself—a touching declaration of love from a father to his daughter—we understand that he is talking about his own daughter, whom he buried at the age of 18. His son was already dead when he was born—he had the umbilical cord wrapped around his neck.

Inside, I cry out to God, the God who vindicates widows, orphans, and bereaved parents. Alexey pauses repeatedly, looking at us in amazement. Then he says, “I didn’t expect a visit like this! I thought some officials would come and check how I live. But this encounter with you... Stay a little longer. Would you like some coffee? I’ve been waiting for you for 80 years!”

When I hand him the heart-shaped waffle from my mother, Alexey is deeply moved. “She prays for us Jews? Tell her to pray that we will see each other again, please!”

Alexey laughs with joy when I hand him the hand-knitted socks from Germany. And when we wrap his wife in her new shawl.

“Please, leave me your number,” Alexey asks. “When are you coming back? As soon as possible? Really?”

Alexey has another dream: “I want to go to Israel. For one reason only: I would go to the Wailing Wall to cry and pray for my whole family.”

Kindly join us in supporting the many Holocaust survivors and Jewish elderly in Ukraine.
Will you help? Any amount helps.

The Z-Word—Why Is It So Hated?

■ Hugh Kitson

Writer, Director & Producer of the *Whose Land?* Documentary

If there is one word that sparks so much controversy, anger, and even hatred among certain social, ethnic and religious groups, it is the Z-word—Zionism. That hatred extends to anything to do with Zionism, and especially anyone associated with it—especially Jewish people—and its very concept. Why is this so?

Fifty years ago, in November 1975, the United Nations General Assembly passed Resolution 3379 that equated Zionism with Racism. It determined that “Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination.” Its purpose was to try to undermine and delegitimise the State of Israel. Of course, like everything else intended to demonise the Jewish State, it was solely based on a series of lies.

Even though Resolution 3379 was revoked in 1991 following pressure from the United States, the false accusation that Zionism is an apartheid and colonial enterprise engaging in the genocide of the people known as ‘the Palestinians’ persists to this day. Moreover, it has escalated into rampant antisemitism across the Western world following the Hamas atrocities of 7 October 2023. Every week on our city streets we have heard the chants “From the River to the Sea Palestine will be free”—a phrase straight out of Article 15 of the Palestinian National Charter of 1968—which calls for “the eradication of Zionism in Palestine”—i.e. the destruction of the Jewish state.

It is important for Christians to understand that Zionism runs much deeper than its political application. It is both a central part of Judaism—the Jewish faith—and intrinsic to the Jewish heart and soul, and has been ever since Biblical times. One very graphic and well-known illustration is found in *Psalms* 137, which was composed during the Babylonian exile: “By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept when we remembered Zion... for there those who carried us away captive asked of us a song. How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill!” (excerpts from verses 1 to 5). There are many other examples as well.

Zionism runs much deeper than its political application. It is both a central part of Judaism—the Jewish faith—and intrinsic to the Jewish heart and soul... ever since Biblical times.

Following the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70AD, when most Jews were exiled from the Land of Israel, many religiously observant Jews have recited the *Amidah* Prayer daily. This prayer includes a petition to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to enable them to return to Jerusalem, to rebuild it, and to dwell there. It beseeches the Lord to regather His people Israel from the four corners of the earth and bring them back into their own land. The *Amidah* Prayer, which is based upon the Hebrew Scriptures and other Rabbinical writings, has been prayed by Jewish people for thousands of years—and today it is being answered as we see the modern miracle of Israel being restored as prophesied in the *Tanakh* (Old Testament).

Whenever the name Zion appears in the Hebrew Scriptures, it is used affectionately, passionately, intimately. The *Tanakh* refers to Zion in three ways. Firstly, Jerusalem is identified as Zion:



| Photo: Shutterstock

The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.

Glorious things are spoken of you, O City of God! (Psalm 87:2)

Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in His holy mountain. Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. (Psalm 48: 1-2)

Secondly, the Land of Israel is referred to as Zion. *Isaiah* says:

“The Lord will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places; And make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord.” (Isaiah 51:3)

This, of course, is a prophecy we are seeing fulfilled in our generation.

Thirdly, the Lord Himself identifies the Jewish people as Zion:

“I have covered you with the shadow of My hand, that I may plant the heavens, lay the foundations of the earth, and say to Zion, ‘You are my people.’” (Isaiah 51:16)

Thus, the God of Israel has created a Divine unity

But what about Zionism and God’s purposes for the restoration of the Jewish people to their ancient homeland, which we are witnessing before our eyes? Sadly, there are many Christians who are in denial of this fact. Some even despise the restoration of Zion and slander it as evil.

It is the ‘Christian’ haters of Zion I want to challenge. If we hate something that is close to the heart of God, we are on a very slippery slope. In *Psalms* 132 we learn that “The Lord has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His dwelling place: “This is My resting place forever; here I will dwell for I have desired it.” (*Psalms* 132: 13-14). God is effectively telling us that He has chosen Zion as His throne-room. *Psalms* 2 endorses this further. It includes a fascinating dialogue between God the Father and His Son, who Christians understand to be Jesus: “Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion.” “I will declare the decree: the Lord has said to Me, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me and I will give you the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for your possession.’” (*Psalms* 2:6-8)

It is well worth reading the opening verses of this *Psalm*, because it puts this momentous declaration quoted above in its context. The first five verses talk about the nations raging against the Lord God and His *Messiah* and wanting to destroy Zion. Isn’t this a picture of what is happening today? The Lord also says that He will have those nations in derision and vent His anger against them.

Does this not point to what is really behind this irrational hatred of the Z-word as well as everything and everyone associated with it? Is it not an assault by the spiritual forces of darkness against the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—and His declaration that He has chosen Zion for His dwelling place? The goal of this assault manifests itself in the hatred of the Jewish people, the Jewish state and the desire to exterminate them, and render the purposes of God null and void. Jewish people can take comfort in the fact that God has promised that will never happen. (See *Jeremiah* 31:35-37) The fact that they have survived thus far through the most horrendous attempts to destroy them through history is testimony to that. *Am Yisrael Chai!*

Hugh Kitson is a Christian documentary filmmaker, writer, director and producer. His latest film “Whose Land?” looks at the legitimacy of Israel in international law and its legal right to sovereignty over Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria (West Bank). The film is narrated by former British Army Commander, Col. Richard Kemp. You can livestream “Whose Land?” at www.whoseland.info

between the city of Jerusalem, the Land of Israel and the Jewish people. While many secular and non-religious Jews may reject this idea, there are many religious Jews would identify this as part of their faith. So, this brings us to the question: Why is the Z-word—and anyone and anything to do with it—so hated?

I would suggest that the Creator of Zion—the City, the Land and the people—i.e. the God of Israel is, in reality, the object of this satanic hatred. Quite simply, humankind as a whole is in rebellion against Him, and anything He loves, humans often hate. The *Amidah* Prayer actually acknowledges this fact, and pleads for God’s mercy and forgiveness.

Of course, Christians also recognise that we all have sinned and fallen short of God’s expectations, and we recognise that we can be forgiven through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Forgiveness and resurrection to eternal life are at the very heart of Christian belief.

Finding Rest in the Lord

■ Rev Henk Poot

Christians for Israel Netherlands

I recently saw a report on how the hostages had found peace in the tunnels of Hamas. Some of them literally found light in the darkness. Peace in the word of God and prayer.

But there is also another side. Last spring I met someone whose daughter was murdered at the Nova festival. After a week, they found her body. I didn't dare ask him if he had found peace. But I do know he still goes to pray with one of his friends in the synagogue, early in the morning and late in the evening.

Some of the most difficult words of Jesus, I find, are the words to his followers in *Luke 21:16-18*: "They will put some of you to death. All men will hate you because of me...But not a hair of your head will perish!"

What a paradox! Rest in the Lord is found not in the absence of darkness, conflict and suffering, but in the presence of God. *Psalm 41:12* says: "You set me in Your Presence for ever."

Whatever my situation, I know that the eyes of the Lord are upon me.

In *Genesis* we read that God creates order out of chaos, brings light into being. And then on the last day, the sixth day, God creates man: Adam and Eve, male and female. He breathes His breath into them and tells them what to do. They are not to rule over what is good and evil, but as God's children they are to listen to His words and to rule over the earth. The sixth day, the day after, perhaps Adam said to Eve, "Now let's get to work and see what we have to do", and then God said "No, today you will sit down. Today is the *Sabbath* and today you will marvel at everything I did and made when you were not yet here."

This is the core of the gospel. Paul echoes this in *Romans 5* (and he knows what he is talking about): I find reconciliation and life with God, not because I found Him, but because He seeks and finds me.

One of the things I learned from my Jewish friends—and it took me some effort at first—was not to ask God for anything on the *Sabbath*. It is an exercise in trust. We may stand in His mercy, in what He pronounces over us.

This also applies when it comes to finding peace in my faith. I don't know about you, but my faith, the faith I can give to God, is not at all certain. And then there are those beautiful words of Paul in *Romans 3:22*: "The righteousness from God comes through the faith of Jesus Christ to all that believe."

Every morning, in my prayers, I go to the source of living water and ask for His faith and His devotion, His wisdom and patience and joy and mercy and peace, in the hope that through His faith I will sanctify the name of God today.

The Hebrew word for rest is *Menucha*. It is somewhat reminiscent of the word *Shalom*. It means that things are whole, that everything is in its place.

In the first place, for Israel, this means that the diaspora, the *Galuth*, is a place of unrest. In the diaspora, there is always the danger of premeditated antisemitism, the head of the snake, but also the danger of losing one's identity as children of God, the scorpion.

Israel will ultimately only find rest in the land that God has given them. The nation of Israel does not belong in the diaspora; it is an abnormality.

But the land is not only a place where Israel can build its own existence, it is also a spiritual place and a place of hope. It is not called the navel of the earth for nothing. This is where the origin of life on earth lies. God says: "This is the place of my throne and the place of my feet, here I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever." (*Ezekiel 43:7*)

It will be in the days of His return that the King of Israel will appear and that Israel will find peace. It is the time when God Himself will return to Zion.

"And the Lord will be king over all the earth, and on that day His name will be the only one." (*Zechariah 14:9*).

You could say that God's return to Jerusalem and the building of the new temple means that God Himself will also come to rest. When the first temple was built, we read in *Psalm 132*: "Arise, O Lord, to Your resting place".

The Bible teaches us that the Lion of Judah is waiting in heaven for the hour when He will assume the Kingship and descend on the Mount of Olives. We may encourage and strengthen Israel in this expectation.

But this is not just an expectation of things to come.

The Jews speak not only of the coming of the *Messiah* but also of the times of the *Messiah*, and I think they are right. The coming of the *Messiah* is happening now—it is in progress. In Christianity, we are accustomed to speaking about the time when the *Messiah* was here and about the great day when He will return, and in between we talk about Jesus dwelling in us in a personal relationship.

But the *Messiah* is here, He is present in history, in God's way with His people. As the Son of God always

was. He is not only the beginning and the end, the alpha and omega—but He is also the entire alphabet. It is His task to gather the children of Israel; it is He who must make Jerusalem a praise on earth. God has placed everything in His Son's hands.

There is strife in the times of the *Messiah*; some speak about birth pangs. The spiritual evils hiding behind the nations are not willing to relinquish their power and give it into the hands of the King of Israel. They lift Jerusalem like a heavy stone: "On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves. On that day I will strike every horse with panic and its rider with madness," declares the Lord. "I will keep a watchful eye over Judah, but I will blind all the horses of the nations. Then the clans of Judah will say in their hearts, 'The people of Jerusalem are strong, because the Lord Almighty is their God.'" (*Zechariah 12:3-5*)

The times of the *Messiah* are not only times of conflict, they are also times of great miracles. And indeed, wonderful things are happening in Israel today. Not only did some of the hostages find God in the tunnels of Hamas, but during the war, unity and wholeness grew in the whole nation. One day, the access roads to Jerusalem were closed because so many people went to the Western Wall to pray. It was a fulfillment of God's promise: "I will pour out the spirit of grace and prayer upon my people" (*Zechariah 12:10*).

These are times when God gives us the opportunity to stand in the gap for His people. In a sense, the times of the *Messiah* are a time of purification and separation, of fall and resurrection—for the world, for Israel and for Christians.

It is about whether we confess that God's Word and His Spirit give truth. It is about whether we embrace our destiny to sanctify God and the land, Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. Whether we choose life over death.

Now is the time for Christians to confess Christ in His fullness: Son of God and Son of Israel; conceived by the Spirit and circumcised on the eighth day. The One who created all things bore our sins, rose from the dead, intercedes before God, and lives in us—Jesus the Jew.

And it will be the Son of God—a Jew—who will come on the clouds of heaven and every knee in heaven and on earth will bow before Him.

Reverend Henk Poot is a Dutch theologian, writer and Bible teacher. He has written many books and articles about the relationship between the church and Israel, including Son of the Blessed (2015).

Threefold Praise

In this series, we explore how the Lord's Prayer is embedded in contemporary Jewish faith.

For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever.

The Lord's Prayer as we know it ends with a threefold praise, just as it began with three petitions for the revelation of God's power. If we compare it with the version in *Luke 11*, we see that this praise is missing in Luke. In a number of ancient and important Greek manuscripts, it does not appear in Matthew either. But it does appear in the *Didache* (the 'teaching of the apostles'), an important early Christian writing from the beginning of the second century AD.

Jewish prayers always end with a praise. This was no different in the first communities of (mainly) Jews who were followers of Jesus.

The praise focuses on God. The Lord's Prayer has started with a prayer for the coming of His kingdom. This is confirmed once again in the closing praise. "Yours is the kingdom." God is king. He reigns. The psalms are full of this. His reign manifests itself on earth as it does in heaven. But when we say this, we acknowledge His kingship and submit to it.

"And the power." When Jesus stands before the high priest on the night He is betrayed, He testifies: "You will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power" (*Matthew 26:64*). In the language of that time, this is also a description of God Himself on

His heavenly throne.

"And the glory." God is surrounded by splendour and majesty. His glory is His divine radiance that illuminates everything. In the Bible, it is the description of His presence, particularly in the tabernacle and later the temple, but also when God revealed Himself on Mount Sinai and in the desert. That glory looks like a consuming fire (*Exodus 24:17*). In post-biblical Jewish sources, the *Shekinah*, God's presence (literally meaning dwelling), is mentioned in this context.

The three praises thus describe God in all His divine power and majesty, at all levels, so to speak—in heaven and on earth. God is king, He reigns with power, and His glory fills the whole earth (*Isaiah 6*).

Recommended Viewing

Zionism at the Ends of the Earth:

A Story of Humanitarianism and Identity

An excerpt from the Foreword by Dame Lesley Max

Dr Sheree Trotter is an historian whose doctoral thesis provides much of the source for this book. I am pleased that her findings will become more widely known, because they provide an accessible pathway to understanding of one of the most currently fraught and misunderstood issues in the world—Zionism. In particular, this book illuminates what Zionism meant both to Jews and to their Christian fellow citizens, in a small nation at the end of the world—New Zealand—at the end of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century.

The sub-title of the book—‘A Story of Humanitarianism and Identity’—reveals the focus which, for me, triggers recognition, page after page.

In particular, the author has given an indication of what is the most poignant element of the collected papers, namely, the letters from Jews in Europe in the 1930s, desperate to find refuge in New Zealand for themselves and their elderly parents from the overwhelming Nazi threat. Those politely worded letters, some on ‘onion-skin’ airmail paper, often beginning ‘*Sehr geehrter Rabbiner*’ (Most esteemed Rabbi), drove Rabbi Astor to unceasing effort on behalf of these trapped people. But very few were accepted.

Dr Trotter reports: “E.D. Good, Comptroller of Customs, commented that ‘Non-Jewish applicants are regarded as a more suitable type of immigrant.’” So only 1100 in all were saved from extermination in Europe. The children of those few rescued individuals are my contemporaries. I can’t imagine much better or more productive citizens.

A distinguishing feature of this book, written by a scholar who is Christian and of Maori heritage, and which deals with Jewish religious, historic and communal matters, is that it is so accurate in its analysis. This perceptiveness and understanding of nuance as well as the broader picture is, in my experience, rare among writers on New Zealand Jewish topics.

One of the most striking elements in this book for me was the evidence of fascination with and sympathy for the return of Jews to the land of Israel among political, civic and academic leaders in New Zealand and the consequent sympathetic coverage in newspapers, both metropolitan and provincial.

Another is the crucial role New Zealand Prime Minister Peter Fraser played, such as at the United Nations in April 1945.

In my view, ‘Zionism at the Ends of the Earth: A Story of Humanitarianism and Identity’ is a valuable and unique addition to the scholarship on a subject that is both historical and profoundly relevant today.

Gentiles Grafted In, Jews Broken Off

■ Johannes Gerloff

Theologian, Journalist, Lecturer & Author

In this article we continue our study of *Romans 11:12-27*, in which the image of the olive tree is central.

Paul states that parts of Israel—“*some of the branches*”—were “*broken off*” (*Romans 11:17*), expelled from communion with their God, from their land and from their original destiny. Paul, however, is not so much concerned about Israel’s behaviour or misbehaviour, but rather about the relationship of the believers from among the Gentile nations with the Jewish people. He targets the arrogance that has characterised the attitude of non-Jews toward Israel over the millennia.

“If some of the branches were broken off, and you, who are a wild olive branch, were grafted in among them, and became in this way a partaker with them of the root and the fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you boast, (remember:) You do not bear the root, but the root bears you. Now you will say, the branches were broken off, in order for me to be grafted in.” (Romans 11:17-19)

Klaus Wengst sees this illustration as portraying the oldest “evidence of the substitution theory or, to be more exact: of the theory of a partial substitution. The Israel that ignores Jesus is seen as rejected, and people from the Gentile nations have taken their place.” In addition, he observes: “In contrast to *verses 1 and 11*, where Paul vehemently refutes the thesis of Israel’s rejection and fall, at this point, he goes relatively deeply into this line of thought”:

“Now you will say, the branches were broken off, in order for me to be grafted in.”

“Correct! They were broken off because of their unbelief. You, however, stand by faith.” (Romans 11:20a)

However, Paul goes on to warn the Gentile who believes in Messiah:

“Be not proud, but fear: For, if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you either. Consider therefore the goodness as well as the (cutting) severity of God: (cutting) severity against those who fell. Towards you divine goodness, as far as you remain with His goodness. Otherwise you also shall be cut off.” (Romans 11:20b-22)

“Like the stroke of the axe cutting down this proud branch, the future passive *ekkopese* (you will be cut off) abruptly closes the sentence” observes Swiss theologian Frédéric Godet.



Grove of Arbequina olive trees near the Syrian border fence, in the southern Golan Heights. | Photo: Flash90

In order to show the dangers of Christian arrogance, Paul engages in a fictive conversation. “*Be not proud*” (*verse 20*), he warns his Gentile Christian reader, and: “*Do not boast against the natural branches*” (*verse 18*).

“*You do not bear the root, but the root carries you*” (*verse 18*), the Apostle explains his warnings and reminds his readers that a non-Jewish follower of Jesus is a “wild olive branch” that “was grafted in among them” and thus, became a ‘*synkoinonos*’, literally, a ‘co-partaker’, “*of the root and fatness of the olive tree*” (*verse 17*).

Theologian Norbert Baumert is quite convincing in his argument that this participation is not just about the common power source. “At least, their origin is different!” Rather: “The grafted

The Jewish teacher finds the answer to this question by turning the Hebrew root ‘*barakh*’, from which the “shall be blessed” (*lehibarekh*) stems, into another root form. He concludes that Abraham’s blessing applies also to the Gentiles, who allow themselves to be ‘grafted in’ (*lehabhrikh*) to the olive tree Israel—as for example the Moabite Ruth or also the Ammonite Naamah. According to the teachings of the Old Testament, this was impossible (*Deuteronomy 23:4-7*). But God not only made these two women members of the people of Israel, he even used them be the ancestors of its most important princes.

The crucial precondition for this, however, was that these non-Jews allowed themselves to be broken off from their original wild olive tree and to be grafted into the noble olive tree of Israel. “Your people is my people, your God is my God!” the Moabite great grandmother of King David professed as she committed herself to her embittered mother-in-law, for better or for worse: “*Where you die, will I die, there I will also be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also if anything but death separate us*” (*Ruth 1:16-17*).

As a matter of fact, as people who have come to faith in Messiah Yeshua from the Gentile nations, we need to be cut out of our natural national and cultural context and be grafted into the olive tree—Israel.

Godet explains this passage of Romans as follows: “*The Gentiles become God’s people through the Jews, not the Jews through the mediation of the Gentiles. Be that as it may! Like it or not, the fact remains regardless!*”

in branches became companions of those noble branches that remained in the olive tree in producing the fatness of the olive! Only in the fruit drips the fat!” This interpretation would also line up with the overall intention of the entire chapter, in which Paul shows how the interaction of the Gentile nations with Israel produces ‘fruit’.

Perhaps Paul, who might have been known as ‘Rabbi Sha’ul of Tarsus’ at this point in his life, uses this imagery and play on words to refer to one of the oldest prophecies of God. In the Babylonian Talmud (*Tractate Yebamoth 63a*), Rabbi Ele’azar asks the question: “*What does the text ‘in you all families of the earth shall be blessed’ mean?*” (*Genesis 12:3*).

Hanukkah in the New Testament

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

On the 25th of Kislev in the year 3622 since creation (according to the Jewish calendar), the Maccabees liberated the temple, which had been desecrated by the Greek rulers for three and a half years. The temple was cleansed and worship was restored.

Hanukkah is the only Jewish festival mentioned in the New Testament but not in the Old Testament, although the Old Testament does refer to the historical circumstances.

Jesus was in the temple on the Feast of Dedication and it was winter (*John 10:22*). That is *Hanukkah*.

Jesus emphasises the importance of the temple by being there at the feast. For He Himself calls the Temple the “House of My Father”. The Temple is the place where God allows Himself to be encountered. When Jesus, the Son of Man, is in the temple, in the House of the Father, at this feast, it creates expectations. The tension is palpable: “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, the promised King, tell us plainly.” Jesus does not tell them plainly—not yet. The Church and Israel have had to endure this tension ever since the cross and resurrection. Jesus’ works bear witness to Him. But there is still one last thing, for which the cross and resurrection are the guarantee in the New Testament. We read about that in *Daniel 7* and Jesus mentions it in *Matthew 24*: “The Son of Man is coming with the clouds of heaven”.



Lighting the candles on the last eve of *Hanukkah*. | Photo: Shutterstock

Daniel sees a vision that sends shivers down his spine. What does he see? Four living creatures, four different ‘animals’, emerge from the sea. The sea is a symbol of the world of nations. Each animal represents one of the great powers of that time.

The fourth animal manifests itself in all its cruelty and horror; it looks terrifying with its iron teeth and bronze claws. And it has its sights set on the ‘saints of the Most High’, on Israel.

Daniel asks for details about the vision. What is the beast? For he had seen that it had ten horns, three fell, and another replaced them. And that horn spoke. Or rather, it roared and bellowed blasphemous language. It wages war against Israel and prevails—initially. For

there is a limit to its power. Until! Until the Ancient of Days comes. God Himself sets limits on the powers.

It concerns the Greek king Antiochus IV Epiphanes, in the first half of the second century BC, who wanted to turn his empire into a single people, culture and religion, under one king, himself, and who claimed divine honour for himself. What did he do? He banned the *Torah*, circumcision and temple service. And he placed a statue of the Greek supreme god Zeus—perhaps also associated with Baal—in the temple. Daniel calls this the “*abomination that causes desolation*” that was placed in the temple (*Daniel 11*). He instituted a monthly feast day in honour of himself. He changed the times, broke the covenant and stopped the sacrificial service.

The Maccabees rebelled against this king. They ultimately succeeded in driving out his occupying army, liberating Jerusalem and the temple, and restoring temple service. All in all, this took three and a half years—in terms of Daniel’s vision:

time, times and half a time. That is why Jesus is in the temple that winter. And now we feel the tension. Because that last part of Daniel’s vision and explanation: the eternal kingship for Israel, that is still not there. Yes, the Maccabees ruled for about 150 years. But their power was also corrupted. It was still not the promised eternal kingdom of the *Messiah*. Then there is Jesus. His deeds testify to Him. Everyone agrees on that. He Himself testifies that He is the Son of Man from heavenly glory: “I and the Father are one.” Then it comes down to faith. To recognition. It becomes very exciting. The Son of Man has come, and will come, as He said, with the clouds of heaven.

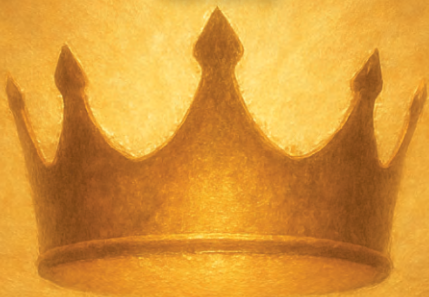
We have been living in that excitement since the cross and the resurrection. Will 2026 be the year of His coming? *Hanukkah* begins on Sunday evening, 14 December, and lasts until Monday, 22 December 2025.

The Bible Speaks

He Will Reign Over the House of Jacob Forever

“And the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.’”

Luke 1:30-33



Perhaps the words of Gabriel that deserve special attention are these: “The Lord will give Him the throne of His father David.” It was not Herod— a descendant of Esau— who was on the throne at that moment, but Jesus, a descendant of Jacob, of Israel. And He will be King over Jacob for all eternity. During Christmas, few take time to reflect on the truth that salvation is from the Jews, yet this is no small or incidental detail. Let us pray for the soon return of Jesus to Jerusalem, where He will take up His throne in the city of David and reign over all the earth.



Doughnuts (*sofganiot*) on sale for *Hanukkah* at the Mahaneh Yehudah Market in Jerusalem. | Photo: Flash90

Dealmaker? Peacemaker?: Trump and the Middle East—Part 2

■ Kameel Majdali

Director | Teach All Nations Inc.

In part one, we learned about Donald Trump and his political comeback and how he practised his legendary dealmaking in the Middle East. We concluded by briefly assessing his interactions with regional players, particularly the Houthis of Yemen and HTS, who are currently governing war-torn Syria. We continue the regional assessment.

Iran

Its nuclear programme is a real worry, and while negotiation has been the understandably chosen method of dealing with it, Iran appears to be running down the clock until Trump is out of office. The Islamic Republic insists that its nuclear programme is only for peaceful purposes. But why does a nation that has ten percent of the world's oil reserves need a nuclear energy programme? And if it is only for peaceful purposes, why do they insist on enriching uranium themselves rather than accepting enriched uranium from a second country?

So, Trump, the master negotiator, chose to negotiate with Iran directly. It did not work. So after many years of military planning, Israel launched the Twelve-Day War in June 2025 against Iran's nuclear facilities. America launched a single and stunningly successful raid on Iran's underground nuclear facilities, which along with Israel's set back the Iranian nuclear programme by years.

Trump consistently supported Israel diplomatically and economically. The grand achievement was the Abraham Peace Accords of 2020 between Israel & four Arab countries: Bahrain, the UAE, Sudan, and Morocco.

Qatar

This underpopulated Gulf Sheikdom is drowning in cash, and they are using it to buy influence. It has been estimated that they have invested USD 100 billion in the US alone. They also built and paid for a US military base, plus they are now one of the top contributors to Trump's 'Invest in the USA' campaign.

But Qatar is heavily influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), the oldest and largest Islamist group in the world. Qatar heavily supports the Palestinian branch of the MB, namely Hamas. They are home to the media outlet *Al Jazeera*, which has a broad reach. The network has been accused of being political



Large billboard in Tel Aviv reading "Mr. President, Finish the job!", June 2025. | Photo: Chaim Goldberg/Flash90

activists disguised as journalists, advocating Islamism in their Arabic language broadcasts while conveying a moderate stance in English.

General Arab Reactions

Some say that America is walking into the Middle East trap. Others, such as Hamas, claim de facto recognition by America because of direct negotiations over the Israeli hostages. Others say he is unintentionally aiding and abetting Islamists. The Houthis see Trump's direct deal with them as a green light to continued attacks on Israel. Nirvana Mahmoud said, "Trump may go down in history as the American President who

The grand achievement was the Abraham Peace Accords of 2020 between Israel and four Arab countries: Bahrain, the UAE, Sudan, and Morocco. By all measures, this was a masterful achievement. Until now, Trump has been an energetic warrior against antisemitism and backs his words with action.

All this was part of his first term. In the second term, there were question marks over Trump's fidelity to the Jewish state. But his bombing of Iran's underground nuclear facilities, brokering an Israel-Hamas—Hamas international ceasefire, and the freeing of the last of the twenty living hostages have earned for Trump Israel's undying gratitude.

Understanding Trump

Despite the perception that Trump is erratic and unpredictable, his transparency and consistency say otherwise. Here are a few points:

1. Trump hates war and killing: In his first term, no new wars were started. He is eager to get ceasefires in Ukraine and the Middle East so the killing will stop. That is also why he chose to negotiate with Iran over its nuclear programme, hoping to come up with a settlement. He does not want to be needlessly drawn into a war in the Middle East. Yet he is not afraid to show strength and restraint, as he did when bombing Iran—a strong but limited military action.

2. Trump the deal-maker: He would rather talk than fight, that's why he dealt directly with North Korean leader Kim Jung Un, Russian president Vladimir Putin, and Iran's foreign minister. His motto: "I have no enemies," meaning he will talk to anyone.

3. America First Agenda: A fierce opponent of globalism, Donald Trump will do what he believes is best for America. Every nation has vital interests that are not totally identical, even with friends like the US and Israel; hence, the different approaches to Iran. For example, Israel wanted to take military action against Iran long before the Twelve-Day War; Trump wanted to negotiate first, even though there was pessimism about its effectiveness.

4. Goodwill: Trump may have strong opinions and a sharp tongue, but he has publicly said he wants to see Gaza (minus Hamas), Iran (minus nuclear weapons), and Syria prosper.

Trump's American-First MAGA base does not want to get involved in Middle East affairs, wars, and nation-building. While it is important to adhere to a robust domestic agenda that meets the legitimate concerns of the electorate, Trump also understands that the unsolvable conflict must be deftly managed with statecraft of the highest order. Otherwise, the entire world could be staring at the four horsemen of the apocalypse.

If you are a praying person, then pray for international leadership (1 Timothy 2:1-4) to be uncorrupted, wise, discerning, and courageous, bringing stability and deterrence in the Lord's land and region.

"Blessed are the peacemakers" (Matthew 5:9).

¹ How Arabs see Trump's 'separate peace' and deals with Islamists by Khaled Abu Toameh, *Israel Today*.

² https://www.israeltoday.co.il/read/how-arabs-see-trumps-separate-peace-and-deals-with-islamists/?mc_cid=cb59a2cd29&mc_eid=d1b6bb8fbb

Short News

Ties Gaza-flotilla and Hamas



The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) state that the confiscated documents from the Gaza-based terrorist organisation Hamas show that Hamas was involved in organising and financing the 'Gaza-flotilla'. This flotilla wanted to break through the Israeli Gaza blockade, but was intercepted early October by the Israeli navy. Members of Hamas's foreign arm, the PCPA are said to have organised multiple flotilla actions in recent years and also own dozens of boats participating in these actions. | Photo: Flash90

Lawsuit Dismissed

An American judge has ruled against the families of about one hundred victims of the 7 October 2023 massacre. They filed a lawsuit against UNRWA, the UN organisation for Palestinians, and demanded one billion US dollars compensation. The judge dismissed the lawsuit because the organisation enjoys impunity. The families announced an appeal.

Ancient Winepress Uncovered

Archaeologists have uncovered Israel's oldest known winepress during groundwork for a new road in the Jezreel Valley. The 5,000-year-old winepress was carved into the rock with a sloping treading floor and collection vat. It was found along with other Canaanite artifacts at Tel Megiddo and offers new insight into daily life and worship in the region before the arrival of the Israelites in the region.

Tax Break for New Immigrants

Israel is considering a 2026 tax reform that would grant new immigrants and returning residents a two-year exemption from income tax. The proposal of the Finance Ministry is aimed at encouraging *Aliyah* and helping newcomers integrate more easily into Israeli society and the economy. Finance Minister Bezalel Sofer described the measure as "a major and meaningful component of our national effort to encourage *Aliyah*."

Ancient Synagogue Unearthed in Golan Heights

■ JNS

An archaeological excavation in the Yehudiya Forest Nature Reserve in Israel's Golan Heights has uncovered the remains of a synagogue that once served a thriving Jewish community more than 1,500 years ago.

The discovery, reported by the Israel Nature and Parks Authority and the University of Haifa in October, sheds new light on ancient Jewish settlement in the region, which the Jewish state recaptured from Syria during the Six-Day War in June 1967.

The dig, led by Haifa University's Zinman Institute of Archaeology in cooperation with the Department of Land of Israel Studies at Kinneret College on the Sea of Galilee, found decorated basalt fragments, lintels and column sections confirming the existence of the house of worship.

Mecheal Osband, who led the dig for the Zinman Institute, told Hebrew media that although over 150 architectural fragments from the Byzantine period had previously been documented in the Golan Heights, the synagogue's exact location remained unknown.



Israelis hike the Yehudiya Forest Nature Reserve, Central Golan Heights. | Photo: Flash90

"The breakthrough came when we noticed an unusual concentration of column sections and decorated stones along a path in an abandoned (Syrian) village," Osband said, adding that "once we started to dig, we uncovered dozens of architectural elements and, to our surprise, the southern wall of the building with three openings facing Jerusalem."

The uncovered structure, which is approximately 13 metres wide and at least 17 metres long, was built in the

basilica style that characterised ancient synagogues, with rows of columns and built-in benches.

According to Dror Ben-Yosef, an archaeologist with the Israel Nature and Parks Authority, the discovery is a "powerful testament to Jewish settlement in the Golan more than 1,500 years ago, during a period when Jewish life flourished in the region."

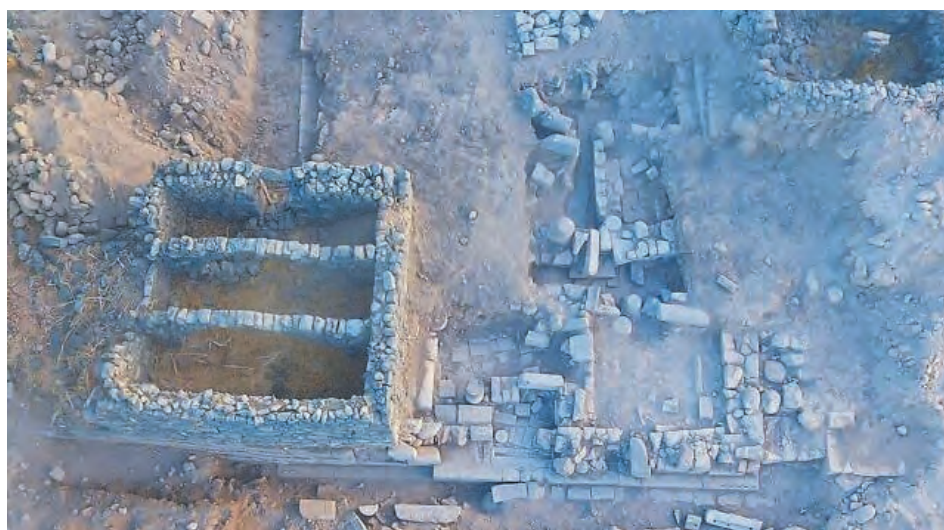
The archaeologist noted that about 25 other ancient synagogues have been found across the Golan Heights, serving not only as houses of prayer but also as centers of learning and community life.

The excavation, which is also supported by the Hecht Foundation and the Yehudiya Forest Nature Reserve staff, will continue in hopes of eventually restoring and making the site accessible to visitors.

In December 2024, a synagogue was inaugurated in Kibbutz Merom Golan—the first house of worship in the traditionally secular northern village.

"The establishment of the synagogue in Merom Golan came following a request from Doron Bogodovsky, a member of the *kibbutz*, who heard from members of a nearby *kibbutz*, Sde Nehemia, about a synagogue we had built there," stated Rabbi Shlomo Raanan, chairman of the Ayelet HaShachar organisation, which is behind the establishment of many synagogues in *kibbutzim* and remote communities throughout Israel.

The building's inauguration, which came after residents were displaced for over a year due to the war with Hezbollah in Lebanon, was held with the enthusiastic participation of *kibbutz* members, returning residents, local politicians from the region, and security forces during the eight-day holiday of *Hanukkah*, marking a significant moment of renewal for the community.



Aerial view of the Byzantine synagogue at the Yehudiya Nature Reserve. | Photo: Dr Mecheal Osband



Architectural pieces from the Byzantine synagogue. | Photo: Dr Mecheal Osband

“Always in God’s Hands”

Released Hostages Talk About Their Faith in Captivity

■ Marie-Louise Weissenböck

Chair | Christians for Israel Austria

How does one’s faith survive in the darkest depths of despair? Even more remarkable is the question of how someone can find faith while being held captive and chained in a tunnel 50 metres below ground. Former Israeli hostages share extraordinary testimonies of faith and resilience reminiscent of the experiences of Biblical heroes such as King David, Daniel, Esther and Paul.

For the Israeli hostages held captive by Hamas in Gaza, there were many reasons to hope that a higher power was watching over them as they endured unimaginable hunger, beatings, abuse, physical and mental torture, interrogations, sexual assault and humiliation. They were stripped of all their freedoms, but amid these incredible atrocities, there was something their captors could not take away from them, even though they restricted it or tried to prevent it—their faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. When they began to share their individual experiences after their release, there was a common ‘thread of faith’ that ran through many of their stories.

Bar Kupershtein (23)—Always in the Hands of the Creator

Released hostage Bar Kupershtein survived more than two years in cramped, dark tunnels with little food and regular beatings by clinging to his faith and believing that he was ‘always in God’s hands’. Bar was working as a security manager at the Nova Festival on 7 October 2023, helping the injured as a paramedic until the very end, when he was abducted and taken to Gaza. On 13 October 2025, he was released as part of a ceasefire along with 19 other hostages in exchange for around 2,000 Palestinian prisoners.

Kupershtein reported that he was held with five other prisoners in a very small tunnel room. They supported each other, even after being beaten. The hostages learned Arabic but resisted attempts to convert them to Islam; every Friday evening they secretly recited the *Shabbat* blessings.

One of the worst moments was when a guard demanded that the hostages decide which of them should be killed—a threat he did not carry out. Bar prayed at the time, “I am in your hands, God.” He later learned that his mother had said the same sentence to a Hamas terrorist who had contacted her by telephone while her son was being held captive. She said: “My son is not in your hands,

he is in God’s hands, and you are in God’s hands too,” she had replied to his threats. It became the family motto.

After his release, Bar presented Defence Minister Israel Katz with a bracelet bearing the Hebrew phrase: “Always in the hands of the Creator.”

Omer Shem Tov (23)—A Hanukkah Miracle in the Tunnel

Omer was held captive in the tunnels of Gaza for 505 days. He recalls a miraculous moment when a small bottle of grape juice he had brought with him and used for *Kiddush*, the *Shabbat* blessing, never ran out nor spoiled. He compared it to the *Hanukkah* miracle, when the oil that was meant to last for one day lasted for eight days. “This is just one of many stories that showed me how good God is, of how He was there with me.” Back in Israel, he said in an interview, “During my captivity, I felt every prayer you said for me, and even in the darkness, I had light.”

Eli Sharabi (53)—“The Power of Faith Is Amazing”

Eli was held captive in Gaza for 491 days. Although he had never been religious, his imprisonment led him to pray. “I am not a religious person, but from the first day of my abduction I recited the ‘*Shema Yisrael*’ every morning—something I had never said before in my life. The power of faith is incredible. There is something watching over you.”

The *Shema* is one of the holiest prayers in Judaism and appears in the *Fifth Book of Moses*: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord is one.”

Keith Siegel (65)—“I Found Faith in the Tunnel”

Siegel also began to pray during his 482 days in captivity. He began to say blessings over the little food he received, something he had never done before, and recited the *Shema* prayer for the first time. “Even in the tunnels, I found ways to feel His presence,” he said, thanking God repeatedly for his survival. After his release, his daughter asked him what he would like for their first *Shabbat* meal together. His answer surprised her: “Do you know what I want most? A *kippah* and a *Kiddush* cup.”

Agam Berger (20)—“I Chose the Path of Faith”

The female observation officers (guardians) of the Israeli Defence Forces, Agam Berger (482 days in captivity) and Liri Albag (477 days in captivity), kept their faith during their captivity. They had been abducted from their guard post at Kibbutz Nahal Oz, together with five other young women, and taken to Gaza. While being held in a terrorist’s house, they learned the Hebrew date from Israeli television. This helped them calculate the Jewish holidays so that they could observe them. They were given hardly anything to eat, yet they fasted on *Yom Kippur* and *Tisha b’Av*.

Agam Berger made a profound spiritual decision during her time in Gaza when she also began to observe *Shabbat*. After her release, she wrote on a blackboard: “I chose the path of faith, and on the path of faith I returned.”

She asked her captors for a *siddur* (Jewish prayer book) during her captivity. One of them laughed at her request. But she prayed to God, and two days later he returned with a *siddur* he had found in Khan Yunis.



Former hostage Agam Berger visits Jerusalem’s Old City with family, a month after her release. | Photo: Flash90

“Your God loves you,” he said to her. The prayer book had probably been left behind by a soldier in the Israeli Defence Forces.

Berger said that observing the *Sabbath* gave her strength: “I simply refused to light a fire on the Sabbath.”

Rom Braslavski (21)—“I was Asked to Convert to Islam”

Rom Braslavski had been held captive by Palestinian Islamic *Jihad* alone and had been taken to the tunnels just two days before his release. His captors told him that if he converted to Islam, he would receive more food.

He refused and was severely abused, tortured and starved. He kept telling himself: “I am a Jew, I am strong, I will not break down.”

Rom and other hostages found their Jewish faith during this difficult time, and it gave them the strength to survive.

Matan Angrest (21)—“Prayers Helped me Through Captivity”

Matan prayed three times a day using a prayer book he had requested from his captors and received from a senior Hamas official. He was moved from place to place. His conditions were very harsh and he suffered torture because he was a soldier.

Matan Zangauker (25)—“Psalms Became My Anchor”

Zangauker told his relatives that he had found a worn book of Psalms (*Tehillim*) underground and prayed from it every day. In a place with little air and almost no daylight, the steady rhythm of these verses became a routine, then an anchor.

Omer Wenkert (23)—Psalm 121 on the Day of His Release

Omer Wenkert was held captive for 505 days. On the day of his release, as he and the other hostages sat there handcuffed and blindfolded, they began to sing a verse from *Psalm 121*:

“I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.”

These hostages found God in the tunnels of the Gaza Strip. They are a great inspiration to the people of Israel, who must recover with them from the trauma of war and captivity.



Former hostage Bar Kupershtein and dozens of Jewish men lay *tefillin* at Hostage Square in Tel Aviv, 31 October 2025. | Photo: Flash90

“I Realise I am Not Alone”—Rita (86)

Rita Savchuk is 86 years old and lives in Kiev. Widowed, childless, vulnerable—and she felt completely alone. Time and again we had to remind her that she did have family: a brother, sister-in-law, cousins, and their children in Israel. Thanks to Christians for Israel, much of her family had emigrated to Israel long before the war. But Rita stayed. When the large-scale war broke out in February 2022 and the bombing of Kiev began, we again helped Rita’s relatives to flee. Everyone who knew her begged her to finally make *Aliyah* and join them in Israel. Yet each time, Rita found a reason to stay in Ukraine.

A year and a half ago, we helped her gather all the necessary documents, just in case she would decide to leave. A year ago, we even accompanied her to a consular inspection at the embassy.



Rita after receiving her visa for Israel.

But even then, she didn’t dare take the step and had excuses not to go. Until a few weeks ago. During one of the most intense rocket and drone attacks, a projectile struck the apartment next to Rita’s. The explosion, the panic... for the first time in a long time, she was truly terrified. The next morning, she called Natalia (our *Aliyah* worker) with a trembling voice and said, “Take me to the embassy. I want to apply for a visa.”

And now it has happened: the visa has been issued. Rita’s first words after hearing the news were: “I realise I am not alone.”

Her family in Israel was overjoyed. They are eagerly awaiting her arrival, especially now that Hanukkah is approaching—the festival of light and hope.



The flat were Rita lived. | Photos: C4I

The Situation’s Worsening Daily

The drone and missile attacks continue. Infrastructure is being severely damaged, while winter has set in. Concerns are growing and, to be honest, we are pessimistic about what lies ahead—although we sincerely hope we are wrong.

The dark clouds over Ukraine are getting darker.

But thanks to your support, we can continue to bring light—to people like Rita, who can now finally return safely to her family.

Thank you for standing by their side.

Nataliya, Aliyah Field worker
| C4I Ukraine

Flee from the land of the north and save yourself to Zion! See Zechariah 2: 6 & 7



Nataliya with Rita’s brother and his wife, who were evacuated from Kiev by C4I in the early days of the war.

Spreading Hope: Christmas Packages for Arab families

This winter, Arab pastor Saleem Shalash (pictured in the middle) and his congregation are once again spreading light and hope across Nazareth and the surrounding areas. As part of their outreach efforts, they are distributing food parcels to Arab families in need.

“Through these parcels, we aim to provide essential groceries to 500 families,” says Pastor Shalash. “But it’s about more than just food. It’s a message

of hope, love, and we also share the gospel.”

In Bethlehem, Rev Naim Khoury and his wife Elvira are also making a difference by distributing Christmas packages to impoverished families and elderly residents. Their outreach provides much-needed support during the holiday season, and your contributions are deeply appreciated.

| Photo: Home of Jesus the King Church

To support these efforts, please complete the donation coupon on the back page (select Arab Christians). Together, we can bring light.

Will you help? Any amount helps.



Bracing for Winter

Ukraine Food Parcel Campaign Begins

Donate a food parcel for poor Jewish families and elderly people.

Winter in Ukraine is approaching, and with it, the harsh challenges that come with the season. The effects of the war are felt everywhere. While we're doing our best not to dwell on the challenges that may come this winter, we're preparing for the worst. We're stockpiling essential supplies now to ensure we can keep helping when things become even more difficult. In the photograph, you see Alexander, who lives alone in the Ukrainian village of Stare, located in the province of Sumy, close to the war zone. The struggles he faces have taken a toll on his mental health. Alexander has little family; only his cousin helps him as much as she can. She helps with the tasks he can no longer manage—cooking, cleaning, laundry, and picking up his medications. But despite her dedication, life remains incredibly difficult. His pension is only about 72 euros a month—barely enough to cover basic needs, let alone his medications. And with winter fast approaching, conditions are growing even more challenging. The freezing temperatures make this season particularly hard in Ukraine, and with the ongoing war, frequent power and gas outages have only exacerbated the situation. In the midst of all this uncertainty, the support we provide to Alexander is truly a lifeline. The food parcels

and regular home visits not only offer him relief, but also bring him a sense of hope. These acts remind him that there are people who care, who think of him, and who keep him in their prayers.



Alexander



Yelena with her food parcel. The food parcel features the logo of Christians for Israel and the text from Psalm 121:4: "Behold, He who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep."

- One €15 parcel contains:
- 2 kg pasta
 - 1 kg grits
 - 1 kg rice
 - 1 kg bulgur
 - 1 kg sugar
 - 2 kg flour
 - 500 gm oatmeal
 - 1 can of peas
 - 1 can of corn
 - 1 litre cooking oil
 - 1 can of fish
 - 1 pack of coffee
 - 1 box of tea
 - 1 bar of chocolate

Will you join us in offering your help and prayers too for our work in Ukraine?
Our goal for this winter: 50,000 parcels.

YES! I Want to Support Christians for Israel

CHRISTIANS FOR ISRAEL MINISTRY

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

ALIYAH - BRING THE JEWS HOME

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

SOCIAL WELFARE PROJECTS

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

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



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