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CHRISTIANS FOR
ISRAEL
INTERNATIONAL

Understanding Israel and world events from a Biblical perspective

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Pieter van Oordt in the Israel store in Nijkerk, Netherlands, head quarters of Christians for Israel. | Photo: C4I

Dutch Outlaw Judea and Samaria Trade

From 22 September, a ban on the import and trade of Israeli products from Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) will come into force. This was announced by the Dutch Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Berendsen on 21 July 2026.

The Netherlands considers the Israeli villages in this area to be “illegal settlements”. The government has therefore repeatedly called for a trade ban within the European Union, but has failed to secure sufficient support for this. Consequently, the government has turned its attention to national measures. In May 2026, the government submitted a sanctions decree to the Council of State for an urgent advisory opinion. The Council’s opinion did not lead to any amendments to the decree. Consequently, the ban will come into force at the end of September. Breaching the ban may result

in a prison sentence of up to six years.

Pieter van Oordt, director of the Israel Products Centre (IPC), describes the trade ban as “extremely disappointing. The government set the whole process in motion as a matter of urgency. That does show that they were very keen to do this and wanted to get it implemented as quickly as possible.”

Among other things, IPC sells products from Judea and Samaria. “For many years, we have worked with suppliers from Judea and Samaria, including those with a large number of Palestinian employees. The ban affects not only Jewish business owners in Judea and Samaria, but also thousands of workers who earn their living there every day, including many Palestinians. The irony of this measure is that the government claims it is standing up for the Palestinians, whilst

those actually affected by it are, in fact, Palestinian workers,” said Van Oordt. Van Oordt hopes to sell all the products from Judea and Samaria that he has purchased this year by 22 September. Almost two-thirds of this stock has now been sold.

Painful Message

Roger van Oordt, the former Director of Christians for Israel Netherlands and the Honorary Consul of Israel in the Netherlands recently stated: “What we are seeing is Jew-hatred in its deepest form. The measures are against some 700,000 Jews living where they’ve lived for 2,000 years, despite partial expulsions. Many in Europe think we need to decide where Jews can live. Not there. But also not here, because we don’t protect them here (in Europe) either.”

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“They Will Come
With Weeping”



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

Colophon

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

Mission

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

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Anglican Church Buys into Historical and Biblical Revisionism

■ Andrew Tucker

International Editor | Christians for Israel

The Church of England's Synod (its lay legislative body) voted Monday 13 July to encourage churches across England to engage with a document produced by Palestinian Christians that accuses Israel of genocide despite requests from Jewish organisations and Britain's chief rabbi to reject it.

The document is titled *Moment of Truth: Faith in a Time of Genocide* and is also known as *Kairos II*, after the Palestinian Christian movement Kairos Palestine that produced it. It describes Israel's military campaign in Gaza as a genocide, states that Israel is a "colonial enterprise built on racism," and says decades of "occupation," "apartheid" and "settler colonialism" are at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The *Kairos II* document claims that "the genocidal war on Gaza is the continuation of the Zionist project to seize all of Palestine, emptied of its Palestinian people" and demands a boycott of dialogue with "Zionists"—which in practice means boycotting as pariahs the majority of Jews. As journalist Melanie Phillips has noted, "Every lie that's been thrown at Israel over its war of self-defence in Gaza—starvation, ethnic cleansing, war crimes—is thrown at it here. While it includes the weaselly caveat that it doesn't justify civilian killings, it portrays opposition to Israel's existence and "resistance"—aka the killing of Jews—as an act of religious faith."

It asserts that the Hamas atrocities in Israel on 7 October 2023 were "born out of decades of injustice, oppression and

displacement since the Nakba of 1948" (the war of extermination waged by the Arabs to destroy Israel at its rebirth in the Jews' ancestral homeland, but which today's would-be exterminators falsely describe as a Jewish war of colonial aggression).

Alluding to Israel's war of self-defence in Gaza, it continues:

The claim of "self-defence" cannot stand. How can a coloniser defend itself against those it has colonised and expelled from their land?

Explicitly justifying Palestinian Arab murderous violence against Jews, it states:

At a time when Palestinian resistance and global solidarity movements are criminalised, we reaffirm the right of all colonised peoples to resist their colonisers.

The Anglican vote does not adopt the accusations as church doctrine but says the church should hear the documents as "heartfelt expressions of the lived experience of Palestinian Christians," and to engage with them in order to better understand the conflict.

Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom Sir Ephraim Mirvis responded on X as follows:

"It is shameful that the Church of England General Synod has recommended engagement with *Kairos II*."

This is a document full of falsehood, which openly rejects dialogue, uses extreme rhetoric to challenge the very existence of Israel and objects to existing peace agreements in the region.

Though it poses as a route to understanding, *Kairos II* in fact functions

as an egregious barrier to it, reducing one of the world's most complex conflicts to a single, warped narrative, which can only harm the cause of peace.

This is a sad day for Jewish-Christian relations."

This is indeed a very sad day for the Anglican church itself. Newly-elected Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury Dame Mary Mullaly has bought fully into the Palestinian liberation theology that has been pushed over recent decades by anti-Israel Palestinian Christian leaders such as Rev Naim Ateek, through the Bethlehem Bible College.

Palestinian liberation theology effectively erases the Jewish people from the Bible and from history. It seeks to identify Jesus as a Palestinian, and places Palestinians at the center of world history. It denies God's covenants with the nation of Israel, and posits that the church has become the elect people of God through whom he is redeeming the world.

This theology affirms the Palestinians in their victimhood, denies them any agency, and encourages them to use violence against the wicked Jewish oppressors.

The fact that the head of the Anglican church affirms this approach is a sign the church has lost its moral and Biblical compass.

Contrary to what the Archbishop proclaims, Jesus and His Apostles taught that God is faithful to His promises, that the Gentile believers have been added to God's covenants with Israel, and that he would redeem the world through the restoration of His people in the last days. Jesus will come again soon, to take His rightful place as Messiah of Israel, head of His church, and king over the nations.

Prayer Points

Israel

- Pray for Israel's protection this summer against rocket attacks, arson, terrorist attacks and other dangers.
- Pray for the recovery and healing of those who are living with deep trauma as a result of the attack on 7 October and the war that followed. Pray that God Himself will heal victims with His love.
- Israel faces constant threats along various borders: on the border with Gaza, on the border with Lebanon and in the south due to the Houthis. Pray for wisdom for all those who have been appointed to organise the defence of these borders. Pray for protection of the soldiers who are stationed in enemy territory.
- "Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. I say to myself, 'The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for Him'" (*Lamentations 3:22-24*). Give thanks to God for His

unfailing love and faithfulness and pray for Israel in light of this promise.

Jewish Community

- Pray for protection of the Jewish community in your nation and region. Ask Him to surround them with His guardian angels and keep them safe from harm. Pray that they will experience His presence, peace, and protection.

Christians for Israel

- Give thanks that there are Christians worldwide who support Israel. Pray that God may give you courage and confidence to stand up for Israel and the Jewish people.
- Pray that churches, pastors, Bible study and youth groups will have open eyes and hearts to recognise God's unfailing faithfulness to Israel and to see His promises being fulfilled in our day as He brings His people home.

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

A No-Nonsense, Strategic Approach to Iran

■ Meir Ben Shabbat

Iran's new supreme leader, Mojtaba Khamenei, has issued an unmistakable threat. Following his father's funeral, he declared: "We pledge to avenge your pure blood and the blood of all the martyrs... by taking revenge against the criminal, disgraceful murderers. This vengeance is what our nation is demanding, and this must definitely be done."

Khamenei's pledge did not come in a vacuum. It joined a growing chorus of calls in Iran for revenge, alongside intelligence warnings of plans to assassinate US President Donald Trump. The extraordinary security measures surrounding Trump's visit to Ankara for the NATO summit reflected the seriousness of the threats against him.

Trump responded to these threats with a stark warning. He stated, "I've been on their list for a long time. ... The only thing is, I've left instructions, if anything happens, to just literally bomb them at levels that they've never seen before."

This was not the first time Trump issued such a warning. In February 2025, as he signed a presidential directive restoring the maximum-pressure campaign against the Iranian regime, he warned that, in the event of his assassination, "I've left instructions: If they do it, they get obliterated. There won't be anything left."

Whether in Tehran, Gaza, Lebanon or Yemen, the enemy must be confronted according to the way it actually thinks, not the way others would like it to think.

The purpose of these warnings is clear: to deter the Iranian regime.

The assumption is that the regime, in deciding whether to execute such an assassination attempt, would weigh the benefits against the price Iran can expect to pay. Once decision-makers in Tehran have understood the response they can expect from the United States, the thinking goes, they will hesitate before acting.

This assumption applies not only to an assassination attempt against Trump, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu or another leader, but also to other forms of Iranian aggression and destabilisation in the nuclear, ballistic missile, drone, naval and terrorist arenas.

Yet this approach rests on a critical assumption: that the decision-makers in Tehran rationally weigh expected benefits against potential costs and that they fundamentally think like Western leaders.



A man holding the Hebrew daily newspaper *Israel Hayom* featuring Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, who was assassinated in a joint United States and Israeli military strike in March 2026. | Photo: Flash90

It is far from certain that this is true in light of the Iranian regime's radical Islamist ideology and worldview.

A document seized by the Israel Defense Forces in Gaza, apparently written by Hamas senior leader Yahya Sinwar shortly before the terror organisation invaded southern Israel on 7 October 2023, revealed how he assessed the cost of the monstrous massacre he was planning.

According to researchers at the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information

manner similar to Sinwar and Hamas.

Against enemies of this kind, deterrence cannot be relied upon. Only prevention and the denial of capabilities can provide real security.

The same principle applies not just to assassination attempts, but to Iran's broader military and terror infrastructure. As long as Iran remains under its present revolutionary leadership, it cannot be safely permitted to retain or rebuild strategic capabilities: nuclear weapons; ballistic missiles; advanced drones and their production facilities; naval forces capable of threatening international shipping; proxy armies; and bodies used to commit terrorism and assassinations abroad.

In the face of these threats, the objective cannot be deterrence. It must be to deny capabilities.

"They're sick people," Trump said of the leaders in Tehran. "To put it more precisely: They do not think as we do."

Whether in Tehran, Gaza, Lebanon or Yemen, the enemy must be confronted according to the way it actually thinks, not the way others would like it to think.

We must therefore not rely primarily on deterrence, but on the aforementioned denial of capabilities. If direct and sustained denial ultimately proves impossible, the only answer may be to create the conditions under which the Iranian people can transform the regime and build a better future for their nation.

Meir Ben Shabbat is head of the Misgav Institute for Zionist Strategy & National Security, in Jerusalem. He served as Israel's national security advisor and head of the National Security Council (2017–2021). Prior to that, for 25 years he held senior positions in the Israel Security Agency (Shabak). This article was published by JNS on 14 July 2026. Reproduced with permission.

Short News

Connection to Judaism



An Israeli government survey reveals that a record number of Jewish Israelis identify first as Jewish and second as Israeli. Pride in and a sense of connection to Judaism have increased significantly, partly due to war and antisemitism. Reflecting on the survey's findings, President Isaac Herzog said: "This highlights the importance of strengthening and maintaining the deep connection among the Jewish people across the world." | Photo: Flash90

Crime Wave

The wave of crime within the Israeli-Arab community is serious. In May alone, nineteen Israeli Arabs were murdered. One of those murders was reportedly the 35th in a feud lasting several years between two families, and also marked the 100th murder since the start of 2026. The high number of murders among Arabs points to a crisis rooted in internal violence, criminal networks, illegal weapons and long-standing feuds.

Rise in Antisemitism in New York

Antisemitic hate crimes in New York rose in May by 71 percent (41 vs. 24). They accounted for sixty percent of all hate crimes, whilst Jews make up only ten percent of the population. So far this year, 152 antisemitic incidents (a six percent increase) have been recorded. These included acts of vandalism and tensions surrounding protests. Critics link the rise to the policies of the new mayor, but a direct causal link has not been established.

Three Empty Seats

Fans attending FIFA Club World Cup watch parties were met with a powerful tribute honouring three victims of 7 Oct. Large display banners titled *Three Empty Seats* featured the stories of Lior Asulin (43), Omer Neutra (21), and Hersh Goldberg-Polin (23)—all connected by their love of football. The displays, placed at FIFA watch party locations, reminded fans of the lives behind the headlines, the seats left forever empty, and the many families still living with the pain of 7 Oct.

An Insight into Israel's Electoral System

■ Mena-Watch

The Independent Middle East Think Tank

Israel is scheduled to hold parliamentary elections again this fall. But who is actually eligible to vote? How do the various electoral alliances come about? And what hurdles must parties overcome to be elected to the *Knesset*? The following article provides insights into the Israeli electoral system.

The Knesset

At the heart of Israel's democratic system is the *Knesset*, with its 120 members. No single party has ever succeeded in winning an absolute majority. The *Knesset* (Hebrew for 'Assembly') is the unicameral parliament of the State of Israel, and its seat is in Jerusalem. The 120 members are elected for a four-year term under a proportional representation system. Every Israeli citizen who has reached the age of 18 is eligible to vote as well as to stand for election at the age of 21.

However, certain individuals—including, among others, the President of the State, the Chief Rabbis, judges, the President of the Court of Auditors, and the Chief of Staff of the Israeli Defense Forces—are generally barred from holding office. The legal basis for the *Knesset* is the 'Basic Law: The Knesset,' enacted in 1958 and amended several times since then. It is one of a total of fourteen Basic Laws that together form Israel's constitutional order. Historically, the *Knesset* was the successor to the Constituent Assembly. It convened for the first time on 14 February 1949, after the first election had been held a few weeks earlier, on 25 January.

Elections

Although members are theoretically elected for four-year terms, the full legislative term is generally not served, and elections are held early. Only six elections have been held after a full four-year legislative term. New elections must be held if:

- Parliament dissolves itself by a simple majority vote and sets a new election date,
- if the budget bill is not passed within a specified time limit,
- if the President dissolves Parliament on the recommendation of the Prime Minister,
- or if, in the event of a deadlock, it proves impossible to form a new government.

To date, Israeli voters have been called to the polls twenty-five times to elect their representative parliament, most recently on 1 November 2022. The election for the 26th *Knesset* must take



The Knesset—The parliament building in Jerusalem. | Photo: Shutterstock

place no later than 27 October 2026. There is only one electoral district. Party lists must clear the 3.25 percent threshold. For a long time, the threshold was only one percent, which led to numerous small parties being represented in parliament. To counteract this, the threshold was first raised to 1.5 percent in 1988 and then to two percent in 2003. Since 2014, the current threshold of 3.25 percent has been in effect, which corresponds to approximately four seats.

Right, Left, Arab

No party has yet succeeded in winning an absolute majority of 61 seats in an election. As a result, there has never been a single-party government—the formation of coalition governments has always been necessary. Before the current right-wing government took office, Israel experienced a series of elections in quick succession due to a

prolonged political deadlock. The rival political camps were unable to form stable governing coalitions. As a result, Israeli voters were called to the polls five times between April 2019 and November 2022. The stalemate did not simply reflect a right-left divide between the political camps, as right-wing parties—such as Avigdor Lieberman's Israel *Beitenu* ('Our Home Israel') and Naftali Bennett and Ayelet Shaked's *HaYamin HaHadash* ('The New Right')—were also represented in the opposition. Rather, the decisive factor was support for or opposition to long-time Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The ultra-Orthodox parties also fall outside the usual right-left spectrum. Although they are right-wing, they have formed coalitions with both right- and left-wing parties in Israel's political history. For them, the most crucial factor is which coalition partners will guarantee

funding for their own school system as well as the—increasingly controversial—exemption of ultra-Orthodox Jews from general military service. The Arab parties in the *Knesset* primarily represent the interests of the Arab minority in Israel, which makes up about 20 percent of the population. They differ greatly ideologically, ranging from socialist-Jewish-Arab (*Hadash* / 'The Democratic Front for Peace and Equality') to Islamic-conservative (*Ra'am* / 'United Arab List'). In the governing coalition led by Naftali Bennett and Yair Lapid, *Ra'am* was part of the government from June 2021 to December 2022—the first time in Israeli history that an Arab party had been part of a government.

Coalitions

In Israel's political system, electoral coalitions are not uncommon. They allow smaller parties to improve their chances of entering the *Knesset* through strategic cooperation. On one hand, there are joint electoral lists, in which several parties run as a single entity with a shared platform and a common list of candidates. Examples of this include the *Kahol Lavan* ('Blue and White') alliance led by Benny Gantz and Yair Lapid, which was the second-strongest force after Netanyahu's *Likud* in 2019–2020, and the *HaTzionut HaDatit* ('Religious Zionism'), through which Israel's far right has been represented in the governing coalition since 2022 and holds several ministerial posts. The parties submit a joint list of candidates and subsequently divide any seats won among themselves.

On the other hand, there are so-called surplus or residual vote agreements, in which the parties remain separate but pool their residual votes during the allocation of seats. This form of cooperation is purely technical and is intended to potentially win an additional seat. The parties do not advocate a common platform and do not have a joint list of candidates. In the past, for example, the left-wing parties *Avoda* ('Labor Party') and *Meretz* ('Vigor') entered into such surplus agreements. A recent example would be this type of cooperation between *Likud* and Religious Zionism. Electoral alliances are an important means of increasing the chances of success for smaller parties in a highly fragmented party system. However, such alliances are often short-lived and frequently dissolve after the election.

Translated and reprinted with kind permission from Mena Watch. First published on 12 April 2026, at www.mena-watch.com



The election for the 26th *Knesset* must take place no later than 27 October 2026. | Photo: Shutterstock

JNS Summit Addresses Challenges

■ **András Longauer**

Hungary

Israel and Jewish communities around the world are facing a rapidly changing reality. From shifting geopolitical dynamics in the Middle East to rising levels of antisemitism across Europe and North America, new challenges continue to emerge. Against this backdrop, the second International Policy Summit hosted by the Jewish News Syndicate (JNS) in Jerusalem brought together politicians, diplomats, journalists, religious leaders and policy experts to discuss the issues shaping Israel's future.

Held from 21 to 23 June, the conference focused on regional security, US-Israel relations, Christian support for Israel and the growing threat of antisemitism. Alongside panel discussions and speeches, participants explored practical policy solutions and strengthened partnerships across political, religious and national boundaries.

Recent developments surrounding Iran dominated many conversations during the summit. While uncertainty remains over the next steps in the confrontation between Israel and Iran, speakers largely agreed that the outcomes achieved so far should not be underestimated.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressed the conference in person, outlining what he described as significant military successes against Iran and emphasising the broader strategic objective of weakening the regime's hold on power. "We created the conditions for its future fall," Netanyahu said. "That is what will be the real triumph, when the Iranian people take their own destiny in their hands and they knock out this brutal regime."

Netanyahu also addressed his occasionally tense relationship with US President Donald Trump. While acknowledging differences between the two leaders, he stressed the strength of the partnership between their countries. "We're leaders of independent and proud countries," Netanyahu said. "Often we see eye to eye. Sometimes we don't. But we respect each other's sovereignty and leadership and commitment to our people."

Concerns about the future of US-Israel relations were also addressed by US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee, who sought to reassure attendees that support for Israel remains a cornerstone of Trump's foreign policy. According to Huckabee, Trump has consistently maintained that America's bond with Israel is "unbreakable."

American commentator Mark Levin likewise argued that recent developments in the region demonstrate



US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee speaks at the JNS conference. | Photo: Oren Ben Hakoon/Flash90

the effectiveness of the combined efforts of Israel and the United States against Iran and its regional proxies.

Although views differed on future policy options, speakers broadly agreed that recent events have reshaped the strategic balance in the Middle East and created new opportunities as well as new risks. One of the most prominent themes throughout the summit was the growing alliance between Jewish and Christian supporters of Israel. Christian leaders repeatedly emphasised their commitment to standing with Israel at a time when international support often appears uncertain. Many participants described the relationship as one of the most significant developments in modern Jewish-Christian relations.

The conference also highlighted the political influence of Christian advocacy networks. Josh Reinstein, president of the Israel Allies Foundation, argued that Christian communities have become an increasingly important source of international support for Israel. "It is Christians, not countries, that stand with Israel," Reinstein said. "And Christians are bringing their countries to us."

Much of the discussion focused on Judea and Samaria, a subject that has gained renewed attention since the outbreak of the current war. Several speakers argued that supporters of Israel should increasingly use the biblical names Judea and Samaria rather than the term "West Bank."

Troy Miller, president and CEO of the National Religious Broadcasters, pointed to a recent organizational decision encouraging Christian media figures to use the biblical terminology. Others argued that the issue reflects broader debates about Jewish historical ties to the land and the future of Israeli communities there.

Christian speakers also delivered a message aimed directly at Jewish

audiences. Rejecting concerns about missionary activity, several stressed that their support for Israel rests on their belief in the enduring covenant between God and the Jewish people.

The threat of antisemitism emerged as another major focus of the summit. Speakers from Europe and North America described a sharp increase in anti-Jewish incidents since October 2023 and warned that many Jewish communities are facing growing security concerns. Discussions covered developments on university campuses, in political movements and across social media, where anti-Israel rhetoric is frequently spilling over into hostility toward Jewish communities.

One topic repeatedly surfaced during speeches, panel discussions and audience questions: the political rise of New York City mayor Zohran Mamdani. For many speakers, Mamdani's growing prominence represented wider concerns about changing political attitudes toward Israel and the normalisation of rhetoric they view as hostile to Jewish interests.

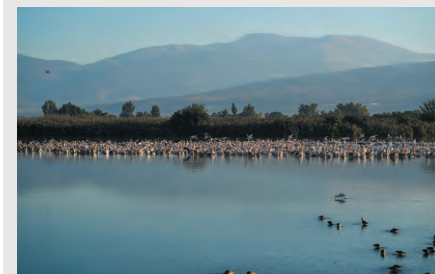
Beyond analysing problems, the summit sought to develop practical responses. JNS published a policy compendium alongside the event, offering recommendations on issues ranging from security and diplomacy to combating antisemitism.

Yet many participants suggested that the summit's value extended beyond policy proposals. The gathering brought together people from different countries, professions and faith communities who share concerns about Israel and the future of Jewish life worldwide.

South African Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein captured that spirit in his closing remarks. Reflecting on the diverse audience assembled in Jerusalem, he cited a teaching from Jewish tradition: "*Kinus tzaddikim tov lahem v'tov la'olam*," which means when good people gather, it benefits both them and the wider world.

Short News

Hula Valley Treasure



The Hula Valley, north of the Sea of Galilee, is a key stopover for migratory birds travelling between Africa and Europe. Depending on the season, visitors can spot cranes, pelicans, storks, and flamingos, as well as local wildlife including otters, nutrias, water buffalo, frogs, turtles, and many fish species. Beyond its biodiversity, the valley reflects layers of history: its role as Israel's northern frontier in Biblical times, the Zionist effort to drain wetlands and develop the land, and modern conservation projects aimed at restoring parts of the original ecosystem. | Photo: Flash90

Achievable Goal

The outgoing head of Israel's intelligence service, the Mossad, David Barnea, stated during his farewell ceremony that the overthrow of the regime in Iran remains a 'feasible objective' for Israel. He urged the country to keep pursuing it particularly at a time when the Islamic Republic is weaker than ever. Barnea stepped down in June 2026 after concluding his five-year-term as Mossad director. He is succeeded by Roman Gofman.

Roman Marble Statues Discovered



Two rare, intact Roman marble statues have been uncovered in northern Israel. The sculptures, depicting figures from the Greek and Roman worlds, were found face down in the collection pit of a Roman-Byzantine winepress dating back around 1,700 years. The statues are protomes, showing the head and upper torso of human figures. Researchers say their careful placement suggests they were intentionally buried, though the reason remains unknown.

| Photo: Flash90

Areas A, B, and C

Who controls Judea and Samaria since 1993?

AREA
A

Under Palestinian Authority

±18 percent
Largest population concentration (cities like Ramallah, Nablus, Bethlehem).

Population
1.6 – 1.8 million of which 0 Israelis

AREA
B

Civil control under PA, Israel responsible for its security

±22 percent
Mainly villages and semi-urban areas.

Population
1.0 – 1.2 million of which 0 Israelis

AREA
C

Fully under Israeli control

±60 percent
Rural, undeveloped areas, villages and farmland.

Population
0.8 – 0.85 million of which 0.5 million Israelis

The Oslo Accords do not state that no Israelis are allowed to live in Area A or B, but Israel has prohibited Israelis from entering Area A by law.

Designations

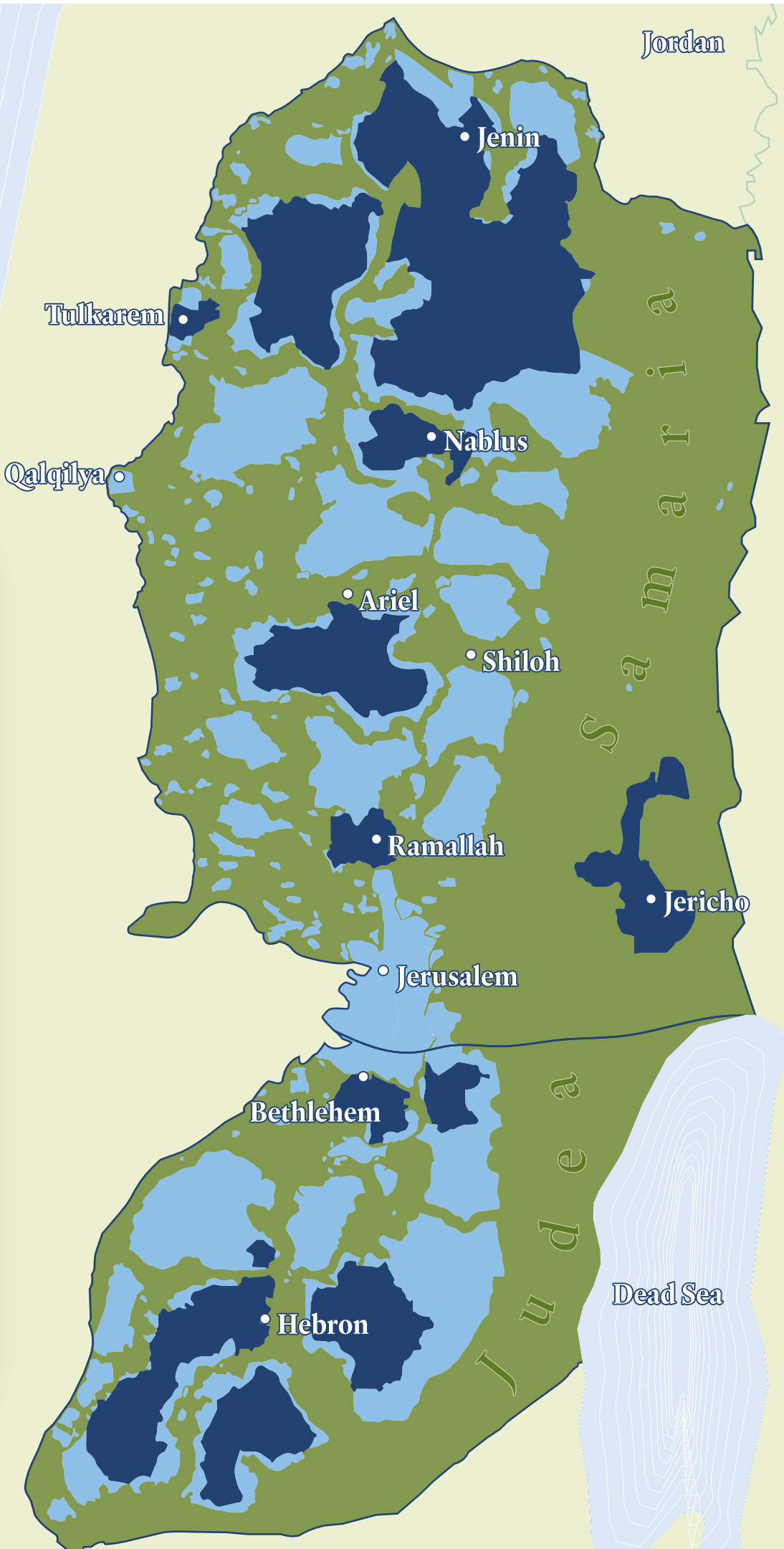
Judea and Samaria

West Bank

Occupied territory

Occupied Palestinian territory

Disputed territory



Facts

- 1 The Oslo Accords are agreements between Israel and the PLO setting out the principles for reaching a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- 2 The aim was to work towards a permanent solution within five years.
- 3 Three zones as a starting point for working towards greater self-governance for the Palestinians.
- 4 The aim was to put an end to decades of Palestinian violence.
- 5 Permanent status negotiations include topics as: settlements, Jerusalem, borders, security.
- 6 The Oslo Accords did not promise the Palestinians a state.

What About the ‘Illegal Settlements’?

■ **Andrew Tucker**

International Editor | Christians for Israel

Amnesty International has once again published a report accusing Israel of various violations of international law. The human rights organisation believes the international community is complicit because it fails to intervene or even continues to support the country.

According to Amnesty, Israel is actively pursuing the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in the West Bank. Nearly 6,000 Palestinians living in the West Bank had been driven from their homes by the end of April, according to United Nations data. At that time, there were a total of 363 settlements, 212 of which were established after 2023.

The prevailing view at the United Nations, the International Court of Justice, and among most international legal authorities is indeed that “Israeli settlements are illegal.” In 2024, the International Court of Justice published an advisory opinion in which the Court held that Israel’s occupation of the “occupied Palestinian territory” had become illegal and that Israel must end its presence in this territory “as soon as possible.” The Court repeated the UN position that Israel’s settlements policy is a violation of international law.

But what about the status of Israelis living in Judea and Samaria? Does the fact that an Israeli lives in this area constitute a violation of international law?

However, there is a strong case to be made that “Israeli settlements” in the West Bank, and Israel’s policies

concerning them, are not illegal under international law—or at least not necessarily.

First, the West Bank is “disputed” territory. Both Israel and the Palestinians have sovereignty claims to the land, which claims have never been settled by either an agreement or a binding decision of a court. Conventional law regarding military occupation is intended for territory conquered from a recognised sovereign state. Because Jordan’s claim to the West Bank was not generally recognised internationally between 1948 and 1967, the area does not meet the classic legal definition of occupied territory. Therefore, some rules of the law of occupation may not apply in the way critics claim.

Second, Article 49, paragraph 6, of the Fourth Geneva Convention is misinterpreted. The standard argument against settlements is based on Article 49, paragraph 6, which prohibits an occupying power from transferring parts of its own population into occupied territory. This provision was primarily drafted to prevent the kind of forced population transfers that occurred during World War II. Israeli citizens who move voluntarily, rather than being deported or forcibly transferred by the state, are therefore not subject to the prohibition in Article 49, paragraph 6.

Third, Israel’s claim of sovereign rights over Judea and Samaria cannot simply be swept aside. They are based on historical and legal arrangements from the Mandate era. However, the Mandate for Palestine (1922) stipulated that Jews had the right to



A Jewish family near the Jewish settlement of Psagot in Samaria. | Photo: Dor Pazuelo/Flash90

establish settlements “in Palestine.” When the State of Israel was proclaimed in 1948, the borders were not defined in the Declaration of Independence. There are very good reasons for asserting that under international law, the State of Israel inherited the borders of the Mandate territory in May 1948. From this perspective, this is not a matter of an occupier establishing itself on another’s sovereign territory, but rather of competing claims to territory whose final status remains unresolved.

Fourth, not all “settlements” are the same. The legality of settlements must be assessed on a case-by-case basis. General assertions that all settlements are illegal must be distinguished from the legal status of specific communities. The legality of a specific settlement may depend on factors such as land

ownership, local circumstances, and applicable agreements, rather than a general rule that every settlement is unlawful.

Finally, the Oslo Accords, concluded between Israel and the PLO in the 1990s, stipulated that “security,” “settlements,” and “borders” are issues to be addressed in future negotiations. The fact is that the Palestinians themselves have agreed that, until a final agreement is reached, Israel has the right to allow Israelis to live in these areas. Declaring all settlements illegal preempts issues that the parties had agreed would be resolved through negotiations.

The claim that “the settlements are illegal” is a dishonest assertion that ignores historical facts and sound legal analysis.

Zion Winery—Pioneers, not Illegal Settlers

Zion Winery, based in East Jerusalem, was founded 180 years ago, at a time when Jews were the largest demographic group in the city.

The winery’s history challenges the International Court of Justice’s position that all Israelis in East Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria are illegal settlers who must be removed. This history shows the winery predates 1967 and was never established through Israeli government policy, revealing the UN and ICJ’s ignorance of how many Jewish communities actually came to live in the land.

First we must correct a common misconception: that Baron Edmond de Rothschild founded Israel’s wine industry in 1882, and that winemaking was banned before then under Islamic rule. In fact, Jews and Christians always made wine, just at home. The oldest

recorded modern winery was Ginio, founded in 1840 in Jerusalem’s Old City, which operated until Jordan expelled Jews from the Jewish Quarter in 1948.

Zion Winery itself was founded in 1848 by Rabbi Yitzhak (Galin) Shor in the Muslim Quarter, making it the oldest winery still operating today. The Galin family, *Hasidic* Jews from Ukraine, had settled in Safed and Tiberias before relocating to Jerusalem after the 1837 earthquake. Patriarch Rabbi Mordechai Avraham Galin led the Tiferet Israel Yeshiva and was influenced by Sir Moses Montefiore’s belief that Jews should return to agriculture. His son Yitzhak acted on this by starting a winery, but the family needed a Turkish trading license that was nearly impossible to obtain. They solved this by using a license belonging to Yitzhak’s brother-in-law, Baruch Shor, and adopted his

surname, becoming the Shor family.

The winery bordered the Western Wall, with barrels placed so no one could accidentally touch the site, and grapes were sourced from the same Hebron grower for decades using indigenous varieties like Hamdani, Jandali, and Dabouki, transported to Jerusalem by donkey convoy. The family spoke Arabic and was well integrated into 19th-century Jerusalem life. A notable figure was Rosa Shor, who ran the Old City’s first wine bar, Hamara van Rosa, near the Temple Mount, serving arak and wine while keeping order with a bat she kept close at hand. She later took over the winery after her husband Shmuel’s early death, becoming its first female director—a striking milestone in the ultra-Orthodox world.

After 77 years in the Old City, British restrictions on industry in residential

areas forced a move to Beit Israel in West Jerusalem in 1925, where the family lived above and below the winery itself. By Israel’s founding, brothers Avraham Meir and Moshe Shalom Shor ran the business as “Shor Brothers,” but suffered three family losses during the War of Independence. The brothers later split the business, with Zion Winery continuing under that name until 1982, when it relocated to Mishor Adumim on the edge of the Judean Desert after 134 years in Jerusalem.

Zion Winery was founded by pioneers, not illegal settlers, and has operated continuously across three centuries and three different governing powers—the Ottoman Empire, the British Mandate, and the State of Israel. Passed down through generations, it is still growing.

This article is based on a piece by Adam Montefiore published in The Jerusalem Post on 30 December 2023.

Unshakable Faith in Asia

■ Dr Leon Meijer

Executive Director | Christians for Israel International

From 7 to 9 July, Christians for Israel Philippines hosted a regional C4I conference that brought C4I representatives from across Asia together with delegates and pastors from the Philippines. Together with Rev Oscar Lohuis and Rev Kees van Velzen from the Netherlands I travelled to the Philippines to join the conference.

As we landed in Manila on 6 July, the conference hosts were watching the sky with growing concern. A super typhoon named Inday was churning across the Pacific, heading directly toward the islands and forecast to strike during the very days we were scheduled to meet. Unaware of the approaching storm, we boarded a bus for the six-hour journey to the Asia Pacific Theological Seminary in Baguio, along with delegates from India, Nepal, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Australia. More than 180 Filipino participants, many of them pastors, were making their way to the same location from every corner of the country.

Midweek, Inday changed course and headed north toward Taiwan, sparing us. On 9 July, as Pastor Conrado Lumahan was unfolding God's love for Israel—the very moment he spoke of God's love for Zion—the ground beneath us shook. A magnitude 4.8 earthquake struck Baguio. There were no casualties, but fear rippled through the hall. Pastor Lumahan never broke stride. Afterward he told us he had seen the alarm on our faces, yet God had given him assurance to carry on.

After each teaching session, a Filipino pastor led us in prayer. One confession stayed with me: until that week one of the pastors had never grasped the place of Israel in God's plan for the world. Now, he said, God had opened his eyes to a love expressed in covenants that are truly everlasting.

Ignorance

The Philippines is home to some 117 million people, a great many of them Christians. Even here, though, hostility toward Israel is spreading, fed by one-sided media coverage. More than seventy percent of young Filipinos, we were told, now view Israel critically. The pastors were honest about the cause: much of it is simple ignorance. Believers remain unaware of what Scripture says about Israel, which is exactly why the work of Christians for Israel matters so vital. Several pastors asked us on the spot to bring a conference to their own churches, especially in Mindanao, where congregations are multiplying.

Faith

Signs of faith are everywhere. Jeepneys



Some of the delegates who attended the Philippines for the Christians for Israel conference. | Photos: C4I

The growing churches in the Philippines are an opportunity for Christians for Israel to help them understand God's love for Israel.

—extended Jeeps painted in all kinds of colours and used for public transportation—rattle past with Bible verses written on their sides, and shops display them as well, even though many Filipinos remain nominal in their faith. Still, the churches are growing, and it is the younger generation who are giving their lives to God. We witnessed this one evening when we visited a local congregation where Rev Lohuis was preaching. It was one of sixteen churches planted by a single pastor who was attending our conference. The hall was overflowing with young people worshipping with an energy that was impossible to ignore. In Mindanao, one church has grown so rapidly that it now has to hold multiple services every Sunday simply to accommodate everyone. These growing churches are an opportunity for Christians for Israel, to help them understand God's love for Israel. The words of Jesus came to mind: "The fields are ripe for harvest—ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

PACT

Mrs Dana Kursh, Israel's ambassador to the Philippines, drove more than three hours to meet us in person. It was a moving meeting as she spoke warmly of the bond between Israel and its Christian friends, and, as a daughter of the covenant people, offered us a covenant of our own, summed up in the word PACT. 'P' is for Prayer. She reminded us that the Aaronic blessing closes with *Shalom*—a word richer than peace alone, carrying wholeness and hope, which Israel longs

for and needs us to pray toward. 'A' is for Address: confront the media bias and antisemitism. We may never reach those who hate Israel, she said, but we can still reach the indifferent. 'C' is for Come—come and visit Israel and help us impact the next generation. 'T' is for Teach—especially the young generation, raising up their responsibility to stand with Israel and to influence their own generation. That very week, she noted, synagogues around the world were reading the passage where Moses hands leadership to Joshua—a lesson in preparing the next generation to take a stand. Ambassador Kursh: "A pact is made between two parties. I stand here as a representative of the nation of Israel, and I ask you to sign this pact with me." The applause was heartfelt. The ambassador presented Plaques of Appreciation to individuals and church representatives who had helped Jewish people make *Aliyah*.

Serving Israel

The original plan was for Rev Willem Glashouwer to speak at this conference, but given his health condition earlier this year, two Dutch colleagues, Rev Oscar Lohuis and Rev Kees van Velzen, came instead. We are pleased that Rev Glashouwer has fully recovered, and though absent in person, his message was present in several quotations. One of his lines returned throughout the days: The Church is called to love and serve Israel so that the Jewish people may one day suddenly feel, "We have a younger brother." When someone texted Rev Glashouwer a photo of his own words projected on the screen, he replied simply:

"Grateful. God's work is moving on."

Spiritual War

Rev Kees van Velzen laid the foundations, drawing on Rev Glashouwer's books *Why Israel* and *Why Jerusalem?* Rev Oscar Lohuis showed how central Israel is to God's plan for the world, and in another lecture, he addressed the lies spread through the media. He reminded us that this is not merely a media war, but a spiritual one. During my lectures I traced Israel's history from Roman times to the present day, and demonstrated that Jesus lived as a Jew, pointing to the tradition of tassels (*tzitzit*) and phylacteries (*tefillin*). As indirect evidence that Jesus Himself observed these customs, I cited *Matthew 23:5*, where Jesus rebukes the Pharisees who "make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long"—criticising their ostentatious display rather than the practice itself, which He shared. Pastor Conrado Lumahan led an in-depth study on *Romans 9–11*. Former General Harsanto of Indonesia described the struggle of the Indonesian Church to leave Replacement Theology behind. Ian Worby (C4I Australia) examined the Church's calling toward modern Zionism, noting how often God declares His love for Zion in the Psalms and the books of the Prophets. Supporting the Jewish people's return to their ancestral land, he argued, should be part of the Church's calling.

None of this would have run so smoothly without the nearly fifty volunteers from Pastor Lumahan's church, serving on the worship, coffee, transport and audiovisual teams. Their effort, joined to the natural warmth of the Filipino people, made the conference a blessing to every one of us.



Honouring supporters in the Philippines for helping bring Jews home to Israel.



ICJ Cases Fuel Ideological Agenda

■ Prof Gregory Rose

Senior Fellow | The Hague Initiative for International Cooperation (*thinc.*)

In the coming months, the UN International Court of Justice (ICJ) will deliver its judgement in the case *The Gambia v. Myanmar* concerning the 1948 Genocide Convention currently before it, launched in 2019.¹ The written and oral phases have closed, and the Court is currently preparing its decision.

This is a show case sponsored by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which has played an instrumental role in enabling The Gambia to pursue its case against Myanmar. The OIC supported (and possibly even assisted) South Africa's case against Israel.

Interestingly, several European states intervened in *The Gambia v. Myanmar* case in support of The Gambia. They are urging the Court to modify its approach to the interpretation and application of the Genocide Convention. They do so in five respects:

- “Holistic” approach to the determination of criminal intent under the Genocide Convention.
- Lowering of threshold for proof of genocide.
- Switch of burden of proof to disprove genocide.
- Preferential reliance on UN Reports as evidence.
- Application of Genocide Convention to IHL in armed conflict.

We understand that this joint “European” intervention was spearheaded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs legal office. The intervening states are Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The joint intervention was lodged with the Court on 15 November 2023.² This intervention was subsequently supported, possibly in view of the Gaza war, by Belgium³, Ireland⁴ and Slovenia⁵, and also by the Democratic Republic of Congo.⁶

It is extremely important to be aware that the approach that the Court takes in the Myanmar case will potentially have significant impact on subsequent cases under the Genocide Convention. Most immediately, this concerns the case of *South Africa v. Israel*, which is currently in the merits phase. Twenty-two states have intervened in the latter case, and of these Spain, Ireland, Belgium, Netherlands and Iceland are effectively presenting the same arguments as those submitted in the joint “European” intervention in Myanmar.

There are a number of remarkable connections between the Myanmar and Israel cases, which indicate that the former case is being used by the OIC and a number of intervening states to influence the Court to take a novel approach to the Genocide Convention, in such a way as to make it more likely that it will make a finding that Israel has breached its obligations under the Genocide Convention:



The Peace Palace in The Hague. | Photo: Unsplash

- The joint “European” intervention in Myanmar was filed on 15 November 2023, which is shortly after the attack on Israel on 7 October 2023, and several weeks prior to South Africa's launch of its case against Israel in late December 2023;
- Several members of the legal team of Myanmar are also counsel for South Africa⁷.

The Gambia appointed Ms Navanathem (Navi) Pillay in 2019 as ad hoc judge in the Myanmar case; Ms Pillay was also (until recently) Chair of the UN Human Rights Council's Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory including East Jerusalem, and Israel, and a strong proponent of the view that Israel is guilty of committing genocide. The reports which have been published by that Commission under her Chairmanship bear some striking similarities to the approach advocated by the European states in Myanmar.

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has played an instrumental role in enabling The Gambia to pursue its case against Myanmar, and supported (and possibly even assisted) South Africa's case against Israel.

The proposed reinterpretation of the Genocide Convention raises concerns for Western-oriented states. A more lenient and expansive interpretation of the Genocide Convention will potentially endanger future peacekeeping operations and participation by States in legitimate urban warfare or counter-terrorism operations by increasing their vulnerability to genocide charges brought by the opponent's supporting States. Operations against combatants embedded within civilian infrastructure, the use of civilian shields, civilians directly participating in hostilities, civil-military dual use

objects and especially combatant strategies employing massively amassed civilian shields will all raise charges of genocide.

The Court's jurisdiction under the Genocide Convention is increasingly being weaponised as a lawfare tool for geopolitical leverage. After decades of neglect, four genocide cases have been lodged in the past four years (with more likely future cases in the pipeline) in the context of armed conflicts.⁸

Increasingly, third states are intervening in such proceedings⁹, advocating approaches to factual and legal matters that advance certain geopolitical, ideological or military agendas.

¹ ICJ, *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (The Gambia v. Myanmar: 11 states intervening)*; <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/178>.

² *Id.*; <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/178/intervention>.

³ <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/178/178-20241212-int-01-00-en.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/178/178-20241220-int-01-00-en.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/178/178-20241122-int-01-00-en.pdf>

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Notable are Prof Philippe Sands and Prof John Dugard—both of whom also played leading roles as members of the Palestinian delegation in the Advisory Opinion proceedings initiated by the Palestinians in the UN concerning the legal consequences of Israeli policies and practices in Occupied Palestinian Territory: <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/186>

⁸ 2022 *Ukraine v. Russia*; 2023 *South Africa v. Israel*; 2023 *Nicaragua v. Germany*; 2025 *Sudan v. United Arab Emirates*.

⁹ Eleven states intervened in the Myanmar case, and so far a massive 22 states have intervened in the Israel case, with the possibility of more interventions.

The Hague Initiative for International Cooperation. www.thinc.info
thinc. exists to strengthen the integrity of international law, counter legal narrative inflation, and promote responsible, evidence based discourse in conflicts where international law is being instrumentalised.

Memories of Three Holocaust Survivors

■ Anemone Rüger

Project Coordinator | Holocaust Survivors Ukraine

If you ask elderly people from the former Soviet Union about 22 June, their expressions will immediately darken. It is the day in the summer of 1941 when, for them, “the war began”—with the invasion by German troops. That was 85 years ago. In Vinnytsia, too, there are still survivors who can tell us about that time.

Jewish life in Vinnytsia dates back to the early 16th century. Although pogroms increased before the First World War and the Soviets later suppressed religious life, a vibrant Jewish culture endured into the 1930s, with Yiddish schools, a theatre, a choir and newspapers. The city’s Yerusalmka district still recalls a once-thriving community that numbered more than 33,000 people—about one-third of Vinnytsia’s population.

Vinnytsia epitomises blood-soaked Ukrainian soil like almost no other city. As early as 1938, the Stalinist secret service carried out a massacre in which it murdered nearly 10,000 political prisoners in Vinnytsia. Following the invasion of the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941 and the subsequent arrival of German troops, the medieval city of Vinnytsia became an administrative centre for death and destruction. The ‘Werwolf’ headquarters was set up just 8 kilometres to the north in the forest. The city’s Jewish population was initially crammed into a ghetto.

Death by Shooting and Suffocation

In April 1942, those fit for labour were selected, forced to work on railway construction and shot once their work was done. 5,000 women, children and the elderly, including new mothers from the hospital’s maternity ward, were shot and thrown into a mass grave; the newborns were buried alive. According to conservative estimates, some 22,000 Jewish citizens were murdered by the German-fascist occupation in Vinnytsia. The mass graves remain easily accessible to this day in the center of the city, just as they were when they were first dug.

Most Holocaust survivors in Vinnytsia grew up in nearby Jewish *shtetls* before later moving to the city. For the team at Christians for Israel, visiting these survivors is just as important as providing food and medicine to elderly Jews in need.

Alexander—Betrayed by Police Officers From the Village

Whilst Koen Carlier, head of C4I’s work in Ukraine, is travelling with some colleagues to the heavily embattled north to deliver 600 food parcels to the Jewish community, visits are on the agenda for me and my colleague Alina. It is astonishing that we are still finding new survivors to whom we can bring a healing touch of God’s love. It is also astonishing what magnificent flower arrangements can be bought for \$10 or \$15 dollars in a country that is in a state of active war. Perhaps this is precisely why people have such a great need to create and share beauty.

We had to earn our visit to Alexander. His wife had long shielded him from visitors, but today he is alert. Despite two heart attacks, his mind is clear. He recalls how his grandparents were betrayed to the Nazis and murdered, and how he and his mother were sent to the Shornishtshe ghetto. “We lived there like dogs,” he says. “After the war, only three mass graves remained.” Though much of the Holocaust is a blur, the hardships of the post-war years remain vivid.



(Left): Alexander with a heart-shaped waffle from Germany / a C4I gift bag. (Right): As Raissa is blind, she feels and smells the flowers that the C4I have brought her. Most of her family perished in the Pechora extermination camp.



“Dad came back from the war crippled. He was blind and could no longer work. Mum and I always got up at midnight. Then we took turns queuing for food until morning, all night long. There were four shops in our village of Kalinovka, and there was a queue like that at each one. We were given 35 grams of bread per person.”

“He didn’t speak until he was 10,” says Shelya of her husband. “Now he’s making up for lost time.”

Then Alexander also tells us about the Germans who came to him a few years ago and begged him for forgiveness on their knees.

Flowers to Touch for Raissa

Raissa is another survivor I’m meeting for the first time. Here, it’s her husband who looks after her every step.

“I’ve been blessed with a good husband, Grigory,” Raissa tells us. “He’s Ukrainian. He looks after me very well. We’ve been married for 64 years!”

When I realise that Raissa can apparently no longer see a thing, I almost feel sorry for the lavish flower arrangement we’ve brought her. Then it occurs to me to let Raissa smell the flowers. The next few moments are straight out of a film.

“Oh, what a bouquet! I love flowers!” Then Raissa very gently strokes every single flower—the lilies, the rose and carnations, the orchids and the asters. “What a bouquet! What wonderful flowers! What a special day you’ve made for me!”

Raissa’s maiden name is Noikhovna, after her father Noikh, or Noah. Her mother’s name was Pessya. Here, too, there is no need to ask who in the family was Jewish. Both her grandfathers fell victim to the Holodomor, the man-made famine under Stalin.

Grandmother Khowa had nine children. Most of the family perished in the Pechora extermination camp. “I still remember the gunshots and how we hid under the bed,” says Raissa. Little Raissa arrived with her mother and sister in the Mogilov ghetto on the Moldovan border. Eventually, they managed to escape. Raissa has an incredible memory. She has memorised every name and every date.

“I remember the day of liberation, when the Germans had to retreat and our army arrived. The whole village wept with relief.”

Mikhail—Copper Pans for a Loaf of Bread

Mikhail has laid the table perfectly and lovingly arranged salad and cold cuts on each plate. He speaks a heart-warming form of Yiddish-tinted Russian with a German-

style ‘R’. We are probably his first guests since he buried his wife, to whom he had been married for 54 years.

His parents were called Matvey and Sura, both from the Vinnytsia area.

“Dad went straight to the front,” Mikhail tells us as he serves us. “He never came back. I never got to know him. He was reported missing. That was terrible, because the widows received no compensation for that. I never met a single member of his family. It was as if they’d never existed.”

Right at the start of the war, Mikhail, just one year old, came to the Bershad ghetto with his mother. Their barrack was hit during a bombing raid. “I’ve no idea how we survived. Everything burnt down. I don’t have a single photo of Dad,” says Mikhail.

Hunger was so severe that Mikhail’s mother traded her copper pans for a loaf of bread. She sent him to stay with his aunt in the countryside, hoping he would be fed. But the Germans soon arrived, taking Mikhail, his aunt and cousin Boris to the Shargorod ghetto and later the Pechora extermination camp. There, his aunt recognised a policeman through the fence and bribed him with a gold locket. Using a horse-drawn cart, he rescued all three—along with six other children.

Five Kopecks for New Papers

After the liberation came the years of famine. “Mum worked hard to keep us alive,” recalls Mikhail. “She got hold of salt and then sold it at the market. We helped her, wearing our galoshes. We didn’t have any shoes.

“Mum had to get us re-registered after the war. All our papers had been burnt, after all. But that cost money—five kopecks per birth certificate. Five kopecks was all Mum had. So she could only get one child registered at a time.

“Once, relief supplies were being handed out. Mum managed to get hold of a pair of shorts for me. They were men’s trousers. They were far too big for me; it looked as if I was wearing a skirt. But there was nothing else. I had to wear them right up to 6th grade.”

Unable to afford university, Mikhail went to work after school. Antisemitic taunts were so common he mentions them only when asked.

Mikhail knows a little German, learnt from volunteers of the Catholic Max Kolbe Society, who regularly visited Ukraine and arranged recuperative stays for survivors at the Khmelnik sanatorium. It is a privilege to build on their work and bring comfort to these lonely survivors.

The Challenges and Tensions that Face Israel

■ Sondra Oster Baras

International President | CFOIC
Heartland

Are we still at war? I have been writing this column “War Diaries” for over two years now and for the most part have documented the feelings, motivations and realities that we are facing in Israel since that terrible day on 7 October 2023. For most of that time, Israel was engaged in active war. Not only were our soldiers out there, fighting terrible enemies, but the entire nation was living a war-time existence. Whether we were running to bomb shelters to dodge missiles and armed drones coming from Iran, Lebanon or Yemen; whether we were managing the home front while our fathers, sons or brothers were off fighting; or whether we were engaged in ongoing mourning over the many wonderful people who fell in this bloody war, we felt we were living through an interminable war.

My son just recently got drafted once again for a 3-month stint, this time in Lebanon. Another son had been drafted on 28 February, the day the war with Iran began, and was only released at the end of May. They are both high-school teachers and have missed months of school. There are so many teachers in the IDF reserves which has seriously compromised the education Israeli students have been receiving for nearly three years. And then there are my daughters-in-law who are constantly dealing with their children and daily life without the help of their husbands. And this is going on amongst young families all over Israel.

Grateful for Every Calm Day

And yet, on the other hand, life goes on in a very normal way. We go to work, the children go to school. We are back to planning holidays, both in the country and abroad. We will be taking our children and grandchildren for a wonderful few days up north, renting holiday cottages with a pool and looking forward to the wonderful activities we love to do as a family—rafting down the Jordan River, hiking in the Galilee and the Golan Heights, enjoying a BBQ, getting lots of pizza pies, and just enjoying our time together as a family.

When we booked this holiday, we were much more limited than usual—we could not go anywhere close to the Lebanese border for fear of bombs and missiles. During these past few weeks, those attacks have been suspended, but we expect them to be renewed at any time. After all, my son is in Lebanon uncovering Hezbollah command centres and weapons caches daily, engaging in battle with terrorists. Hezbollah is still



Sarah, her friend and her goats—protecting the Land of Israel. | Photo: Sondra Oster Baras

The political tensions do not truly represent the real feelings in the country. We are strong and we stand together, always.

out there, amassing weapons wherever possible. So all-out war can resume at any time. But if we can, we will raft down the Jordan and thank God for whatever quiet we can enjoy.

My husband and I are also planning a week's holiday in Europe. Of course, we booked our flights on El Al because it is likely that something will happen and whatever foreign airlines are currently flying to Israel will cancel with no notice and with no sense of responsibility to provide us with alternative arrangements. For most of the past three years, we did not travel abroad. We were hesitant to leave the country when our children are serving or when missiles could start flying at any minute. But after all this time, war has become part of our routine and we are moving forward.

Israeli Elections

Part of our current routine is the upcoming elections for the *Knesset*. For the first time in Israeli history, the *Knesset* and government will be serving its full term. No one believed it was possible, especially given the fact that this government served during the worst tragedy in the history of the country. On the one hand, there seems to be more hostility between the coalition and the opposition and their respective supporters than ever before. Accusations flying from one side of the aisle to the other in the *Knesset*, journalists aligning themselves in support of either the opposition or the government, flinging accusations at one another—these are regular occurrences

for years now.

On the other hand, there is more agreement between the various sectors of Israeli society on basic ideologies and principles than ever before. Support for a Palestinian State is practically unheard of, support for decisive measures against our enemies is at an all-time high, and most of the country identifies more strongly with traditional values and are finding comfort in faith and Jewish heritage more than ever before.

Politics is a hugely divisive arena. There are arguments over priorities, the economy, the military, education and judicial reform. The current government is very right-wing and as a result, have pushed forward amazing developments in Judea and Samaria. But unfortunately, some of those accomplishments have been achieved by appeasing coalition partners with policies that are antithetical to classic Zionism. It makes you wonder—why can't politicians reflect the values of the people?

But the most explosive issue in the current political culture is our prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu. While he is an extremely capable man, he has been in power far too long. Too many, politicians and ordinary citizens alike, carry such terrible resentment against him, for real and not so real reasons, that he is totally incapable of creating consensus on any issue—even issues that are in consensus. And the politicians are always so angry—always on the defensive, arguing against a politician rather than for a good policy.

So as we approach elections, as tensions rise, the challenge will be to see past the politics and remember the values and sentiments that connect us all. But the good news is that most Israelis realise this and are seeking new ways to create a political culture, to elect political leaders, who will represent the values that truly unite us and create consensus, cooperation and enable the amazing solidarity that we all feel towards one another and towards our country to be expressed in the *Knesset* as well as on the streets. It is possible—only time will tell if we succeed!

So yes, we are still at war but we have learned to live with war. And our political arena is a mess, not much different from what is happening in so many countries. But the political tensions do not truly represent the real feelings in the country. We are strong and we stand together, always. We have faced the worst enemies ever and we have prevailed.

A Visit to the Heartland

A few days ago, I visited one of the new farms that have sprouted up all over Judea and Samaria. The owners of the farm, a young family with four children, have been developing farms for years, dedicated to protecting the land from Palestinian encroachment. Now in their newest location, on a strategic mountain range between the highest mountains in Samaria and the Jordan Valley, the view is amazing. Located between hostile Arab villages and the nearby community of Migdalim, their sheep and goats graze on vast stretches of empty land, protecting the land and ensuring the continued safety of the people of Judea and Samaria.

Sarah hosted us in her home and showed us the exercise studio she had built and which now boasts 120 members. And we visited the goat pen. She is an extraordinary woman, mother, exercise coach and shepherd. And she is building up the land. Sarah represents the best of Israel, a woman who cares nothing for politics but is acting on her beliefs, with kindness and dedication. This is what Israel is really about. And when you support the people of Israel, these are the people you are helping. Thanks to your continued support and prayers, and with God's help, we will continue to prevail.

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

Twisting Canada's Indigenous Story

■ Dan Donovan

Ottawa Life Magazine

Dr Sheree Trotter undertook a speaking tour in the USA and Canada where she visited Jewish communities and attended events in Los Angeles, Washington DC, Toronto, Ottawa, Victoria (Vancouver Island) and Hawai'i. She spoke in various meetings in universities, synagogues, homes and conferences. The following article was written by Dan Donovan for *Ottawa Life Magazine*, about the event that was held in Ottawa.

How Canada's Indigenous Story Is Being Twisted To Spread Antisemitism

The conversation about Israel in Canada has taken a strange and troubling turn. Over the past few years, anti-Israel and antisemitic activists have increasingly wrapped themselves in the language of Indigenous struggle, borrowing the symbols, vocabulary, and moral authority of Indigenous peoples to advance a political agenda that has little to do with Indigenous rights and even less to do with historical truth.

Last week at the University of Ottawa, two respected Indigenous leaders—Dr Sheree Trotter and the Hon Harry S. LaForme—finally said what many have been thinking: Canada's Indigenous story is being twisted, manipulated, and weaponised to spread antisemitism and Jewish hatred in Canada.

Their event, titled *Antizionist Colonization of Indigenous Movements—and our Response*, was not another campus shouting match. It was a sober, fact-driven intervention from two people who understand exactly what indigeneity means and what it does not. They came to Ottawa as representatives of the Indigenous Embassy Jerusalem, an initiative dedicated to restoring accuracy and integrity to a debate that has been hijacked by activists who treat Indigenous identity as a political prop.

The event was co-sponsored by the Network of Engaged Canadian Academics (NECA), a national organisation of more than 400 faculty members across 54 campuses committed to combating antisemitism in Canadian higher education and restoring the core mission of the academy: open inquiry, academic freedom, and the pursuit of knowledge. NECA's involvement was not incidental—it was essential. At a time when many universities have struggled, or in some cases refused, to confront rising antisemitism, NECA has stepped into the vacuum with a clarity and courage that institutional leadership has too often lacked. Dr Cary Kogan, a professor in the School of Psychology who served as the event host, embodied that commitment, guiding the discussion with a steady hand and capturing the urgency of this moment for both the Jewish community and Canadian academia. His remarks underscored why NECA's work matters: without faculty willing to stand up for objective truth, scholarship, and intellectual integrity, conversations like this simply would not happen. Their support ensured that the event unfolded in an environment where facts, not intimidation, set the terms of debate.

Dr Trotter, a Māori scholar and co-founder of the Embassy, began by grounding the discussion in the fundamentals of Indigenous identity. Indigeneity, she explained, is not a metaphor or a slogan. It is defined by ancestral connection, cultural continuity, and the lived experience of a people rooted in a specific land over millennia. "Indigenous identity is not something you can borrow when it suits your politics," she told the audience. "It is something you inherit, preserve,



Hon Harry LaForme and Dr Sheree Trotter at Ottawa University.

and fight to protect." By that standard, she argued, the Jewish people are one of the world's oldest Indigenous nations, with continuous presence in the land of Israel long before the rise of modern states or the political movements that now claim to speak for the region.

Justice LaForme, a former judge of the Ontario Court of Appeal and one of Canada's most respected voices on Indigenous law, brought a Canadian legal and historical lens to the conversation. He warned that anti-Israel activists have been attempting to graft the language of Indigenous struggle onto a conflict with entirely different origins. "Our history is not a tool for someone else's agenda," he said. "When people misuse Indigenous identity to attack another people's legitimacy, they are not standing with us. They are exploiting us." He argued that this appropriation does more than distort the Middle East; it undermines the integrity of Indigenous movements in Canada by turning their history into a rhetorical weapon for unrelated political goals.

Both speakers challenged the popular claim that Israel is a colonial project. They noted that the region's borders shifted repeatedly under Ottoman, British, Jordanian, and Egyptian control, and that the Jewish state emerged not as a foreign implant but as the national revival of an Indigenous people who maintained continuous presence in the land for thousands of years. They reminded the audience that the wars of 1948 and 1967 were initiated by surrounding states seeking to prevent or reverse Jewish independence, and that the refugee crises on both sides were the tragic result of those wars, not the product of a single narrative of victimhood.

Their presentation also confronted a second distortion that has taken root in Western activism: the idea that the conflict is fundamentally about people rather than land. Historically, the opposite is true. Early political movements in the region focused on preventing Jewish sovereignty, not on advancing the rights of a distinct national population. Even the refugee definitions created in the late 1940s were based on residency during a narrow two-year window, not on ethnicity or national identity. The modern Palestinian national identity is real and meaningful today, but it was not the driving force behind the early conflicts. Understanding this history is essential, they argued, because the Canadian debate often treats history as optional.

What lingered after the event was not the politics but the clarity. Dr Trotter closed her remarks with a line that cut through the noise: "Indigenous identity is not a weapon. It is not a slogan. It is a story of survival—and no one has the right to twist it to attack another people." She reminded the audience that the Jewish story in the land of Israel is not a modern invention but "a continuous Indigenous narrative that has endured exile, empire, and erasure."

Justice LaForme echoed that sentiment with the bluntness of someone who has spent a lifetime defending Indigenous rights in Canadian courts. "When activists try to use our history to delegitimise the Jewish people," he said, "they are not standing with Indigenous peoples. They are standing on us. They are using our trauma to fuel their politics." He warned that this trend is not solidarity but exploitation—and that it ultimately harms Indigenous communities by diluting the meaning of their own struggle.

Both leaders stressed that acknowledging Jewish indigeneity does not negate Palestinian identity or aspirations. What it does negate is the false narrative—now common in parts of the activist left—that Jews are foreign to their own homeland. "Truth is not a threat to peace," Dr Trotter said. "But lies always are."

The Indigenous Embassy Jerusalem is not trying to win a culture war. It is trying to restore honesty to a conversation that has been warped by years of propaganda, miseducation, and the casual misuse of Indigenous language by people who have never lived an Indigenous experience. Their visit to Ottawa was a reminder that facts still matter. History still matters. And identity—real identity—cannot be borrowed, twisted, or weaponised without doing violence to the people it belongs to.

Justice LaForme left the audience with a final warning that felt aimed not just at activists but at Canadian institutions themselves. "If you care about Indigenous rights," he said, "then you must also care about Indigenous truth. And that means respecting the truth of other Indigenous peoples—including the Jewish people."

Whether Canada is ready to hear that truth is another question. But after last week's event at the University of Ottawa, it is clear that many Canadians are more than ready to listen.

Hugh Kitson—A Man After God’s Heart

■ Andrew Tucker

International Editor | Christians for Israel

Hugh Kitson was a gifted Christian writer, producer, and director, who was passionate about helping his fellow Christians (and others) understand God’s love for Israel and the Jewish people.

Above all, he was a beautiful person, a loving father and husband, and a dear friend to many.

I first met Hugh in around 2005, and we immediately became good friends. Over the years we regularly corresponded and would meet up regularly at conferences and events. I have fond memories of my visits to Hugh and Noreen in their quaint home in the south of England.

Although he was British, Hugh had a close connection with Australia. He spent many years early in his career in Perth. Towards the end of his life he returned to Australia, together with his wife Noreen, settling in Melbourne where Hugh’s son and family live. He died in June in Melbourne after a long fight with cancer.

Hugh was best known for his many documentaries and articles.

I particularly love Hugh’s book *Jerusalem, the Covenant City* in which he tells the story of the city’s past, present, and prophetic future. He wrote the roughly 335-page book as a companion to his feature-length documentary of the same name, presented by Bible teacher Lance Lambert. The book expands on the film with additional historical background, weaving together the biblical record, archaeology, and current Middle East events to argue that Jerusalem’s history was “written in advance” by its prophets.

Kitson’s main thesis is that Jerusalem holds a unique, divinely ordained status: the city God declared as His eternal

dwelling place, whose fate the ancient prophets, especially Zechariah, foretold would become a source of international obsession and conflict “in the last days.” Like Lambert, Kitson reads the twentieth and twenty-first century struggles over the city, from its restoration to Jewish sovereignty to ongoing geopolitical disputes, as the unfolding of that covenant promise made to Abraham and reaffirmed throughout Scripture.

Written from an evangelical, pro-Israel Christian Zionist perspective, the book is intended to challenge Jewish, Christian, and secular readers alike to recognise God’s active hand in Jerusalem’s turbulent history and to consider its ultimate, eternal destiny.

In another collaboration with Lance Lambert, the documentary *Blessing, Curse or Coincidence?* (presented by Lambert, with the first volume subtitled *Israel, the Womb of the Kingdom of God on Earth*), makes the case that God’s covenant with Israel is the central thread running through biblical and world history. Its message centers on *Genesis 12:3*, where God tells Abraham, “I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you.” Kitson unpacks everything he sees bound up in that promise: divine protection for the Jewish people, the Land of Israel as an everlasting possession, and Israel’s role as the vehicle through which God carries out His purposes for mankind, culminating in the New Covenant.

The film then tests that promise against the historical record, tracing what happened to nations and empires that opposed God’s covenant people, from Pharaoh’s Egypt at the Exodus through the biblical era to the fall of Rome. The argument is that this pattern of blessing and judgment is not coincidental but a demonstrable, recurring law of history, and it sets up the trilogy’s broader thesis



Hugh Kitson.

(developed further in later installments, including one applied to America) that a nation’s treatment of Israel and the Jewish people has real, traceable consequences.

Hugh’s last project was *Whose Land?*—a multi-part documentary (narrated by Hugh’s good friend Colonel Richard Kemp) that explores the question: to whom do Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria belong, from the perspective of international law? Through a series of interviews with historians and international lawyers, the documentary argues that the land truly belongs to the Jewish people, and that this truth has been deliberately distorted and manipulated by the enemies of the Jewish people.

Part one, *Foundations*, centres on the 1920 San Remo Resolution and the League of Nations’ Mandate for Palestine, which recognised the Jewish people’s historic connection to the land and their right to reconstitute their national home there. The film argues

this Mandate remains binding under international law, that Britain repeatedly violated it, and that the ‘Palestinian’ claim to the territory has no comparable historical basis, a cover-up Kitson says has distorted understanding of Israel’s legal rights, especially over Jerusalem.

Part two, *Two State Solution?*, picks up at Israel’s 1948 independence, examines the wars it has fought and subsequent peace efforts, and questions whether a two-state solution would actually bring peace.

The documentary takes explicit aim at media terminology like “occupied Palestinian territory,” which it argues has normalised a false narrative. It’s aimed at politicians, journalists, academics, and the general public, arguing from a strongly pro-Israel, international-law-based perspective.

Hugh is resting in peace, awaiting the resurrection.

Mourning for Zion

In this series, we examine the Beatitudes and how they guide us in experiencing true happiness in God’s Kingdom.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” *Matthew 5:4*

Like the first, the second Beatitude is likely an allusion to *Isaiah 61*. In verse 2 of that prophecy, the prophet says that he has been sent “to comfort all who mourn”. Jesus applied that prophecy to Himself (*Luke 4:18–21*).

Who does the prophecy mean by ‘those who mourn’? We read this in the following verse. It speaks of those who mourn in (or: for) Zion: “and

provide for those who mourn in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair...”

Why are they mourning? The rest of *Isaiah 61* speaks of the rebuilding of desolate places and the restoration of ruined cities. It is obvious that they are mourning the destruction of the Temple, the city of Jerusalem and the royal house of David.

Throughout the centuries, there have been such mourners. A Jewish text dating from around 200 BC (*Tobit 13:16*) sings of the hope of Israel for which they long:

“Jerusalem shall be rebuilt. God’s temple will rise again in the city and endure for ever and ever. How happy I shall be when what remains of my people beholds your

splendour and praises the King of Heaven. The gates of Jerusalem will be rebuilt with lapis lazuli and emeralds, every wall with precious stones. The towers of Jerusalem will be rebuilt with gold, every parapet with pure gold.”

They were there in Jesus’ time too. The temple had been rebuilt, it is true. But it was still not quite as God had intended. Moreover, there was no king from the house of David on the throne in Jerusalem. They mourned and prayed for the restoration of Jerusalem. Simeon was one such person. He was awaiting the consolation of Israel (*Luke 2:25*) and was able to sing of Jesus coming to fulfil that promise.

They are still there in Israel. Every day it is said in the prayers: “Build Jerusalem, your city, speedily and in our days.” How many people, even now, look forward to the consolation of Israel?

Recommended Reading

A Handbook on the Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith

by Craig A. Evans and David Mishkin (eds.)

Book review by Kees de Vreugd

For centuries, church and theology read the Bible with little awareness that Jesus was a Jew. Instead, traditional theology often portrayed Him as opposed to Israel and Jewish tradition. In the 19th century, Jewish historians began reclaiming Jesus' Jewish identity—a perspective aptly described by the German term *Heimholung Jesu* (“bringing Jesus home”).

Since the mid-20th century, much research has been carried out exploring the Jewishness of Jesus. This book attempts to make that perspective accessible to a broader public. A special feature of the book is that about half of the contributors are Jews and Israeli citizens who believe in Jesus as the *Messiah*. This is part of the “homecoming of Jesus”.

The book is structured according to the image of a (olive)tree. Connecting to the roots is not just going back to the beginning, but drawing food from the source. The Jewish roots of Jesus are first and foremost in the Hebrew Bible (i.e. the Old Testament). The first part of the book is devoted to an outline of central themes in the Old Testament, relevant for understanding the New Testament: God's plan for Israel and for the nations; the *Sabbath* and the Biblical feasts, and the function of the tabernacle and the temple. This is the soil in which Jesus is rooted.

Part II explores the Roots: the Jewish world of Jesus, and how His life, identity and teachings are fully Jewish. Part III goes on with the trunk: the Jewish disciples and the Jewish apostle Paul, as well as the Jewishness of the message of the resurrection. The reclamation of Paul as a Jew is still under much debate. Personally, I would advocate for a stronger ongoing devotion of Paul to the *Torah* and the Jewish tradition than the author of this particular paragraph does. In my view, and in light of other remarks by Paul, *Ephesians* 2:15 cannot mean that Christ abolished the Law. Rather, He abolished the hostility with regard to the Law.

Part IV, the Branches, describes the “parting of the Ways” of early Judaism and early Christianity, and the mending of the Ways in our own time with the rise of Jewish and Arab believers in Jesus in Israel. I would like to see a more open attitude towards, and positive affirmation of, orthodox Judaism in this regard. But that might require a handbook of its own.

■ Johannes Gerloff

Theologian, Journalist, Lecturer & Author

In this article we continue our study of Romans II, focusing on the ‘mystery’ referred to in *Romans* 11:25.

“... all Israel will be saved, ...” *Romans* 11:26

Israel has a future! When the measure appointed by God for the non-Jewish world is full, all of Israel will be saved. But what does this mean?

The “all of Israel” is related to the “part of Israel” in the previous verse. Therefore, it cannot be understood in any other way than by the totality of the people of Israel. This refers to those people, some of whom have previously experienced hardening. Furthermore, the overall context of *Romans* 9–11 uses the terms “Israel” or “Israelite” to refer to the Jewish people, which is why it must be ruled out that this is referring to a “spiritual” Israel that is to be saved.

“All Israel will be saved” means that the entire Jewish people has a future as a Jewish people, as “Israel.” Adolf Schlatter concludes from this text that “Israel will also have its special position as a united whole in the transfigured form of the divine kingdom.” Martin Schacke even comes to the conclusion that “every descendant of Abraham, of all times, belongs to it” (compare *Isaiah* 45:25).

The *Mishnah* (*Tractate Sanhedrin* 10:1), like Paul, sees that “all Israel has a share in the world to come.” The rabbinic teachers base this claim on *Isaiah* 60:21, where the Old Testament prophet may also have had the image of the olive tree in mind: “Your people are all righteous. They will inherit the land forever, the offspring of my planting, the work of my hands for glory.”

According to Jewish teaching, however, this does not mean that everyone who can prove their descent from Abraham automatically has a guarantee of salvation. The *Mishnic* text continues immediately: “The following have no part in the world to come”, naming three groups of Abraham's descendants who will not belong to “all of Israel”:

- first, “whoever says that the resurrection of the dead cannot be deduced from the *Torah*”;
- secondly, “whoever says that the *Torah* is not from heaven”; and
- third, “the Epicurean”.

As is so often the case in Jewish biblical interpretation, it is about admonition, which is intended to protect against erroneous paths and encourage the reversal of undesirable developments.

It is interesting to see how far the

Israel Has a Future



Beautiful sunset view of Bethlehem from the olive grove in Shepherds Field. | Photo: Shutterstock

rabbinic teachings correspond to the statements of the *Messiah* Jesus in this case too.

First, “whoever says that the resurrection of the dead cannot be derived from the *Torah*”: In his debate with the Sadducees, who categorically denied the resurrection of the dead, Jesus did not base his arguments on the prophet Daniel, who is generally considered the first witness to a doctrine of resurrection in the Old Testament (*Daniel* 12:13). He argues in a very “Pharisaic” way from the *Torah*, the five books of Moses, and proves his doctrine of the resurrection: “Concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said of God when he declared: ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’” (*Exodus* 3:6)? “The one true God is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (*Matthew* 22:31).

Secondly, “whoever says the *Torah* is not from heaven”: Jesus also attributes eternal value to the way we deal with Holy Scripture. He admonishes his disciples: “Truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, neither a iota, not a dot will pass from the *Torah* until all is accomplished. Whoever therefore breaks one of the smallest of these rules and teaches men so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (*Matthew* 5:18).

Thirdly, “the Epicurean”: The “Epicurean” is first and foremost a follower of Epicurean philosophy and thus an atheist. The *Gemara*, the rabbinic interpretation of the *Mishnah* in the *Talmud*, then explains the Epicurean even more precisely as someone who “speaks contemptuously of the Bible and its students.”

In *Matthew* 12, we meet Jesus in a situation where the Pharisees are speaking contemptuously about the Holy Spirit, who works through the Scriptures and its disciples. Jesus explains to his disciples: “All sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. If anyone speaks against the Son of Man, he will be forgiven. But if anyone speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will never be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in the world to come” (*Matthew* 12:31).

“All Israel will be saved!” is the mystery that Paul reveals to his Roman readers. For Paul, the assurance of the salvation of ‘all Israel’ does not arise from any speculations he makes, but quite simply from reading his Bible.

Paul does not say anything here about when this will happen—apart from the fact that first the “fullness of the Gentiles” must have been reached. We can only speculate about the exact number of this full number of Gentiles, as well as about whether the salvation of all Israel will occur immediately after the full number of Gentiles has been reached, or whether there will be a period of time in between. For Paul, it is crucial that his Gentile Christian readers understand a salvation-historical connection between cause and effect. Within this context, they should recognise their position towards Israel and fulfill their duty to the Jewish people.

This is also evident from the way verse 26 is connected to verse 25. The apostle does not write: “And then all Israel will be saved.” He adds verse 26 not temporally, but causally to the previous sentence: “And so—in this way!—all Israel will be saved.”

Rosh Hashanah: The Call of the Shofar



Rabbi Shmuel Eliyahu blowing the Shofar in northern Israel, 29 October 2025. | Photo: Michael Giladi/Flash90

■ Kees de Vreugd

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

The Jewish New Year falls in the seventh month of the Jewish calendar. How does that work?

The seventh day has a special significance in the Bible. It is the *Sabbath*, set apart by God as the day on which He Himself rested from His work of creation, and the day He gave to Israel as a sign of His covenant.

The shofar sounds today to gather Israel. But it also sounds to awaken the Church and the nations. The seventh month of the Jewish calendar speaks of the future.

Just as the seventh day has a special meaning, so too has the seventh month. On the calendar of festivals that God gave to Israel, two feasts fall in the spring: *Passover* in the first month (the beginning—literally: head—of the months, *Exodus 12*) and *Shavuot* seven weeks later. The third major feast, *Sukkot*, falls in the autumn, in the seventh month. Five days before *Sukkot* comes *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement. But the seventh month itself begins with a special day. The first day of the seventh month is to be a complete day of rest. Moreover, it is announced in a distinctive way—by the sounding of the *shofar* (*Leviticus 23:24*). Therefore it is also called the ‘day of blowing’ [*the shofar*, *Numbers 29:1*].

Over the course of time, this day came to be known as *Rosh Hashanah*. The

term itself literally means ‘Head/beginning of the year’ and is derived from the Bible (*Ezekiel 40:1*), although there it does not refer to this particular day. The seventh month is, however, the month in which important years such as the sabbatical year and the jubilee year begin. During the Temple period it was also the new year for determining the tithes of vegetables. The *Mishnah*—the corpus of Jewish oral tradition—moreover mentions three other New Years within the Jewish calendar: the New Year of kings and festivals on 1

Nisan (the month of *Passover*, in the spring); the New Year for the tithe of livestock (August); and the New Year of the trees (January/February). These various New Years may be compared to our fiscal year, civil year, and ecclesiastical year, each with its own cycle.

So much for the technical aspect. What, then, is the significance of sounding the *shofar*? Maimonides, one of the great Jewish scholars of the Middle Ages, says that the *shofar* is intended to awaken those who are asleep. It may be a call to repentance and self-examination, an alarm warning of approaching danger, or a cry of grateful relief after danger has passed. The *shofar* also proclaims the kingship of God.

The ram’s horn recalls the binding of Isaac (*Genesis 22*). Isaac was bound upon

the altar, but God provided a ram in his place. An ancient Jewish tradition says that nothing of this ram was lost: its ashes lay beneath the altar of the Temple. The strings of David’s harp were made from its sinews. Its left horn was sounded on Mount Sinai, and its right horn will be sounded in the last days, as it is written: “*And in that day a great trumpet will be blown*” (*Isaiah 27:13*), and “*The Lord will be King over all the earth*” (*Zechariah 14:9*). In other words, the ram symbolises the life of Israel, from its origin to the consummation of its history. Today, this includes both the destruction of the Jewish people in the *Shoah* and their rebirth in the State of Israel—a *shofar* blast in our own time, not only for Israel, but especially for the Church and for the whole world.

Jesus said that when the Son of Man comes in glory, He “*will send out His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds*” (*Matthew 24:31*). This is how *Isaiah 27:13* continues: “*And those who were lost in the land of Assyria and those who were dispersed in the land of Egypt shall come.*”

The *shofar* sounds today to gather Israel. But it also sounds to awaken the Church and the nations. The seventh month of the Jewish calendar speaks of the future. *Rosh Hashanah* is a day of judgment, but also a day that proclaims God’s kingship. Zechariah prophesies how God will reign as King in Jerusalem, and how the nations will then come to bow before the God of Israel together with Israel at the Feast of Tabernacles. May the Church and the nations hear the blast of the *shofar* and take its message to heart.

Biblical Roots By David Nekrutman

Weapons of Perception

Some of the greatest spiritual battles are not fought with dramatic acts of rebellion—they begin with a simple conversation. Long before Eve reached for the forbidden fruit, the serpent first sought to reshape her perception of reality. *Genesis 3* reminds us that the enemy’s greatest weapon is often not force, but distortion.

Most English translations present the serpent’s opening words in *Genesis 3:1* as a complete question: “*Did God really say...?*” Yet the Hebrew text paints a far more vivid scene. Rather than polished dialogue, we encounter an interrupted conversation filled with unfinished thoughts and rapid exchanges.

The serpent begins with a fragment: “*Even if God said not to eat from all the trees...*” Before he can finish, the woman interrupts him to correct the obvious falsehood. She explains that every tree is available except one in the middle of the garden, though she adds an extra safeguard by saying they must not even touch it. Then, before she completes her thought, the serpent interrupts her with his boldest lie: “*You certainly will not die... You will become like God, knowing good and evil.*”

This conversational pattern is intentional. The Hebrew word *aph* (“even”) would never begin a sentence. Scripture allows us to step into a discussion already in progress, preserving its raw, unfinished nature instead of smoothing it into polished dialogue. Remarkably, the biblical narrator steps back and lets us listen. Rather than merely telling us what happened, God invites us to witness how deception unfolds.

Cognizant of God’s command, the serpent used his exaggerated statement as bait. By provoking Eve to respond, he successfully redirected her attention. Instead of reflecting on God’s overwhelming generosity—the countless trees freely given—her focus narrowed to the one restriction. Once her attention shifted, the serpent introduced an entirely false narrative that questioned God’s character and promises.

This remains one of Satan’s oldest strategies. He rarely begins by inviting us into outright rebellion. Instead, he distorts reality, plants doubt and reframes God’s goodness until we begin viewing His commands as limitations rather than loving protection.

Genesis 3 is therefore more than the story of humanity’s first temptation. It is a mirror exposing the conversations that still take place within our own hearts. Every day we are invited to decide whose voice will shape our perception of reality. Wisdom begins by recognising the serpent’s distortions and intentionally returning to the trustworthy voice of God.

Iran, the Bible, and Shia Islam

■ Kameel Majdali

Director | Teach All Nations Inc.

When it comes to global conflicts, the Middle East is in a class of its own. Where other regions battle over history, ideology, geography and politics, the Mideast has the added dimensions of spiritual and theological causation. To gain more insight into the latter, we need look no further than the Bible itself. We will also briefly explore Shia Islam.

The Bible

The name 'Iran,' which means 'land of the Aryans,' is not found in the Bible, since the name was only adopted in 1935. Before then it was known in the Bible as 'Persia' (29 x), 'Persians' (5 x), 'Persian' (2x), 'Elam' (28 x), 'Elamites' (2 x), 'Parthians' (1 x), 'Media' (6 x), and 'Medes' (14 x).

The first mention of the Iran region was in *Genesis 14* when the king of Elam, Chedorlaomer, encountered Abraham at the battle of the kings. Persia's imperial past (539-333 BC) meant that it had a prominent place in the Bible. Cyrus the Great, prophesied by name in the Book of Isaiah 150 years before his birth, would be the man who allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. This demonstrated the kindly, tolerant, liberal and magnanimous nature of the Persian monarchy towards the Jewish people.

It would not always be that way. Decades after Cyrus, in the fifth century BC, a hateful, genocidal Persian prime minister named Haman convinced King Ahasuerus to sign the death warrant for all Jews in the empire. The irony is that the Jewish people faced their first existential threat from the cultured, educated and sophisticated Persians.

The Bible books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther and Daniel all have a Persian backdrop, while Nehemiah, Esther and Mordechai held prominent positions in the empire. The curtain of the Old Testament came down with the Book of Malachi, with the Persians ruling in the land.

The Romans ruled during the New Testament period, but the Persians did not completely disappear. The Magi who visited the Christ child were probably Zoroastrians from Persia. On the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2:9, Persia was represented by Jews from Parthia, Media and Elam.'

Shia Ascendancy

The Iranian Revolution's most significant accomplishment was to spearhead a Shia Muslim ascendancy. This is crucial to understand. The Shia came in being during the seventh century AD, shortly after the birth of Islam. They split with the majority of Sunnis over the issue of who is the rightful successor of Muhammad. The Sunnis say their Prophet's successor should be elected; the Shia say he should be a blood relative. The battle of Karbala in 680 AD, where such a blood relative, Hussein, son of Ali, and grandson of Muhammad, was defeated and massacred, became the official split between the Sunnis and Shias. To this day, Shia Islam commemorates that event on the tenth day of Muharram (*Ashura*) as a holy day of mourning, where they cut themselves until blood flows.

The Shias, as only 15% of the global Muslim community of over 1.7 billion, have always been treated as second-class citizens. For instance, the oil-rich areas of the Persian Gulf region are mostly inhabited by Shia Muslims; yet it is the Sunnis, in places such as Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, who control the oil and hold the wealth. The resentment, even the hatred, between these two branches of Islam is very great.

Some *Shiite* theologians say that they would continue to



Traditional Iranian mosque dome. | Photo: Adobe Stock

be the underdogs until the end of time, when Allah would reverse their fortunes and put them on top. Iran's Islamic Revolution is viewed by the Shias as their long-awaited turning point to power. The US embassy hostage crisis of 1979-1981 and Hezbollah's 'victories' over Israel in 2000 and 2006 are offered as proof that Shia are on the rise.

The Islamic Republic has been actively pursuing its goals since 1979. What, then, do they really want?

For one thing, Iran carries leadership ambitions. It wants to be the leader in the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Muslim world. Iran once had an empire and, given the chance, would like to have it again.

Iran wants to control the Muslim holy cities of Mecca and Medina. These are under the administration of Saudi Arabia. From the Iranian point of view, the Saudis and Sunnis have been running the holy cities for the last 1,400 years. It is now the Shias' turn.

Justice and hegemony are also on the wish list. Iran feels a great injustice has been done to the people of Palestine and cannot understand why the world is 'dragging its feet' to give them their own state. Also, it says it is unjust to punish Iran, a signatory of the nuclear nonproliferation treaty, for seeking peaceful nuclear technology, when Israel, which did not sign the same treaty, is allowed to hold on to its proven nuclear arsenal. Shia ascendancy is high on the Iranian agenda. As explained earlier, the Shias are destined to rule the Muslim world and the entire world in the last days. The arrival of the Shia-dominated Islamic Republic of Iran, the perceived humbling of America and Israel, and the building of a Shiite Crescent from Iran to Lebanon, are interpreted by Iran as a fulfilment of this long-held Shiite destiny.

'Parts of this article come from the book *'At the Door: Key Nations, Last Days, and the Coming King'* by Kameel Majdali, Melbourne, 2015.

The Bible Speaks

The God of Israel

God has placed His Name upon Israel and reveals Himself to the world through Israel. Throughout Scripture, Israel is called to be a light to the nations. As the Lord declares: "The people I formed for Myself that they may proclaim My praise" (Isaiah 43:21). In His faithfulness, God sustains Israel and entrusts them with a unique calling: "You are My witnesses," declares the Lord, "and My servant whom I have chosen" (Isaiah 43:10).

Israel's calling is not just about Israel; on the contrary, it is about God and about the world. For why does God choose Israel? "You are My witnesses," declares the Lord, "that I am God" (Isaiah 43:12). Through Israel, the nations are invited to know Him.

Priestly blessing during Passover. | Photo: Flashgo



Short News

Arab Girl's Heart
Saves Jewish Boy
in Jerusalem

For nine months Rafael, a three-year-old Jewish boy, never left Schneider Children's Medical Center. His hospital room was his home. A small device on wheels was his heartbeat. His family's suitcases were already packed for New York—where the wait times for a donor heart are shorter—when the phone rang. Six-and-a-half-year-old Saba Badir from Kafr Qasim, an Arab Israeli city east of Tel Aviv, had collapsed during a family vacation in Eilat. She never woke up again. In their darkest hour, her family agreed to organ donation—without hesitation. Today, inside Rafael's chest beats the heart of a little girl whose family, in their darkest moment, chose hope.

| Photo: Heart transplant recipient Rafael (Clalit Health Services/Schneider Children's Spokesperson's Office)

7 Oct. Survivors
Exchange Vows

Two former hostages who were abducted together into the Gaza Strip on 7 Oct. 2023, were married at the beginning of July in a ceremony attended by captivity survivors and Israeli President Isaac Herzog. "We prayed for your return, we were moved to tears when you came back home, and this evening we were privileged to rejoice together with you and to bless you under the *chuppah* (wedding canopy) on your joyous day," tweeted Herzog, congratulating Sapir Cohen and Alexander ("Sasha") Troufanov. The couple were kidnapped by terrorists from Gaza who infiltrated the Troufanov's family home in Kibbutz Nir Oz in the northwestern Negev. Cohen was released in November 2023. Troufanov was freed in February 2025, after spending 498 days in captivity.

Ancient Acre
Fortress Comes
Alive at Night

After a \$4.5 million investment, Old Acre's Knights' Halls are launching a 35-minute video-mapping show tracing the city's history from the Hellenistic period to modern Israel, in a bid to bring visitors back north and help struggling local businesses.

European Jews:
The Zionist Movement—Part 4

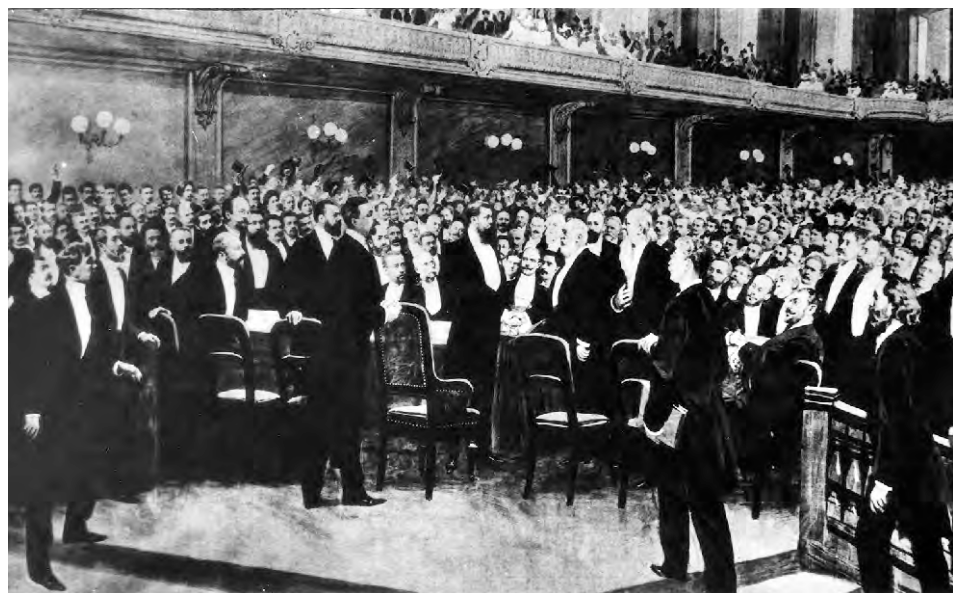
■ Edda Fogarollo

Historian | President | Christians for Israel Italy

Despite the aloof reception among Zionist circles in Vienna, Berlin and Cologne of his ideas for the Jewish State and even the indifference of the aristocrats, Theodor Herzl was not discouraged and remained faithful to his original project.

His book, *Der Judenstaat*, was mostly acclaimed in Eastern Europe where the Jews offered him talented, organised and experienced manpower for the realisation of his dream, even though all major Jewish newspapers in Russia were unfavourably disposed towards his plan. Herzl also received support from his Austrian friend Max Nordau, who compared his determination and tenacity to that of Luther, and Rev William Hechler, the Christian chaplain of the British Embassy in Vienna who saw the realisation of the Jewish homeland as fulfilment of the biblical prophecies. Herzl looked everywhere for supporters of his Jewish cause: he travelled to all European capitals, asked various heads of government for audiences and even went to visit the Sultan of Constantinople, Abdul Hamid, to explore his project of land purchase in Palestine. The Sultan, however, as an expression of the already decadent Ottoman Empire, tacitly denied the request of relinquishing control over some parts of Palestine. From this encounter, therefore, Herzl did not gain any advantage for his people. He rarely received anything more than formal interest from governors on all his trips, and the only support that kept him going came from his self-confidence along with the approval and hope of the oppressed Jews, for whom he fought with such determination.

At the end of 1896 he had not yet achieved any concrete progress on his project; often suffered from melancholy and in desperate moments his words were filled with sadness: "My name will grow after my death. I am conscious today, as I have always been, that I have used my pen like a man of honour. I have never sold my pen, never used it to mean ends, never even made it an instrument for the promotion of friendships. This last testament may be published." As a good actor playing his role on the stage of a half-empty theatre, Herzl had to proceed, and on the first days of January 1897 he decided to announce a general assembly among Zionists in Switzerland for the summer of that year. His motto was, "If you want it, it is not a fairy tale,"



Theodor Herzl at the First Zionist Congress in Basel in August 1897. | Photo: GPO Israel

as he valiantly strived to transform potential into reality. Together with his supporters and his experience as a journalist, he started working on organising the Zionist Congress.

first President of the State of Israel. During the Congress which ended on 31 August, the bases for the Colonial Jewish Trust were laid, later established as the Anglo-Palestine Bank, to support the

"'At Basel, I founded the Jewish State.' If I were to say this today, I would be greeted with universal laughter. In five years perhaps, and certainly in fifty, everyone will see it."

On Sunday morning, 29 August 1897, the first Zionist Congress opened in the concert hall of Basel Municipal Casino. Together with his reliable contributors, Herzl managed to organise the first world conference of Jews, who joined from all Europe almost 1,900 years since the diaspora. Some 250 journalists from all over the world attended the event. All participants wore an official recognition badge with the emblem of the Lion of Judah framed by the Star of David with the following inscription: "The establishment of a Jewish state is the only possible solution to the Jewish question." Once back in Vienna on 3 September, Herzl wrote in his diary: "If I had to sum up the Congress of Basel in one word—which I shall not do openly—it would be this: 'At Basel, I founded the Jewish State.' If I were to say this today, I would be greeted with universal laughter. In five years perhaps, and certainly in fifty, everyone will see it."

Theodor Herzl's Last Years

The return to Palestine was no longer an abstract idea or dream for the Jews, but a reality that was finally taking shape. The second Zionist Congress, which took place the following year, welcomed the young Russian Chaim Weizmann (1874–1952), a student of chemistry at university in Berlin, who only later became well known in Jewish history as

purchase of land in Palestine.

Herzl spent his last years trying to give the Zionist movement official recognition among the most powerful European nations in order to raise funds for the purchase of land for those who until then were forced to emigrate from Eastern European countries given the spread of pogroms that by then had also reached Poland. Herzl's conviction of being called by destiny to help form the State of Israel was very strong. According to him, Zionism embodied the characteristics of a philanthropic work: he believed that rich Jews should help the poor ones by purchasing Palestinian land that belonged to the Turkish Sultan who, claimed Herzl, would gladly sell land given the serious economic crisis that affected his empire. Major European nations such as Germany and England should guarantee the transaction deals between Jews and the Sultan. Herzl travelled extensively in order to establish new diplomatic ties that would guarantee the necessary conditions for his people to immigrate to Palestine. However, his success rate was much lower than he expected. On his birthday, 2 March 1901, he wrote in his diary: "Today I am forty-one years old... almost six years since I started this movement that has made me old, tired and poor."

Myth: ‘Hatred of the Jews is the Result of the Establishment of the State of Israel’

■ Bryce Turner

Executive Director | Christians for Israel
New Zealand

Faced with a barrage of misinformation, distortions, and blatant lies, supporters of Israel are constantly challenged to defend their position. We continue addressing this issue, bringing information and resources to combat these myths. Oscar Lohuis of the Netherlands has written specifically on this topic, and we thank him for permission to use his work in this section.

Myth: ‘Hatred of the Jews is the Result of the Establishment of the State of Israel’

The hatred of Arabs or Muslims against the Jews did not begin with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. This is evident from the fact that Arab-led pogroms against Jewish communities occurred well before 1948.

The Nabi Musa Riots of 1920

On the morning of Sunday, 20 April 1920, approximately 60,000 Arabs gathered in Jerusalem for the Nabi Musa Festival. At the time, the city was also filled with Jewish and Christian pilgrims. The younger brother of the Grand Mufti incited the crowd, who began chanting slogans such as “Palestine is our land, the Jews are our dogs!” What began as a festival quickly

descended into chaos. Many in the crowd drew daggers and clubs, shouting: “The religion of Muhammad was established with the sword!” The city became a battlefield. The crowd chanted: “Slaughter the Jews!” and: “Cut their throats!” In the Old City, violent Arab mobs committed horrific acts, including the gang rape of several Jewish girls. Five Jews were killed and 216 wounded. This violence bears a chilling resemblance to the atrocities carried out by Hamas on 7 October 2023, though on a much larger scale.

The Pogroms in Hebron and Jerusalem of 1929

The ‘Hebron Massacre’ was a mass killing carried out by Arab residents of Hebron against the city’s Jewish population in the British Mandate of Palestine on 23 and 24 August 1929. A total of 67 Jews were murdered—55 Ashkenazi and 12 Sephardic—and more than 50 others were injured. It was one of the bloodiest pogroms during the British Mandate period and brought an abrupt end to the centuries-old Jewish community in Hebron.

Following Friday prayers on 23 August 1929, thousands of worshippers poured out of the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem and attacked Jews. In the Jewish Quarter of the Old City, the Montefiore neighbourhood and surrounding suburbs, 31 Jews were murdered. In one home in Jerusalem, five members of a

single family were slaughtered. Over the course of those days, a total of 131 Jews were killed by Arabs. In response, British forces intervened, resulting in the deaths of 116 Arabs.

Long before the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, and well before the wars of 1967 and 1973, there had already been massacres committed by Muslim Arabs against Jews in Palestine. The Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Amin al Husseini, was instrumental in spreading the antisemitic propaganda that fuelled these attacks. The Grand Mufti would align himself with Adolf Hitler, whom he met in 1941. During World War II, he actively supported the creation of an Islamic SS division that was responsible for the mass murder of Jews in the Balkans.

The Muslim Brotherhood

The Muslim Brotherhood is a radical Islamic movement founded in 1928. Its leaders were—and in many cases still are—sympathetic to Nazi ideas and directly inspired by Hitler. The group’s founder, Hassan al-Banna, translated Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* into Arabic, calling it *My Jihad*. In the 1930s, the Muslim Brotherhood sent representatives to Hitler’s rallies in Nuremberg and spread antisemitic propaganda such as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. During World War II, they supported Nazi Germany and organised mass protests and pogroms against Jews in Palestine.

Their goal was to wipe out the Jewish population in the Middle East. The Muslim Brotherhood later gave rise to groups such as the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) and Hamas, as well as many other radical Islamic organisations across the Middle East and beyond, including as ISIS, Al Qaeda, Hezbollah, the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Boko Haram, the Taliban, the Houthis, and others. These terror groups have caused death and destruction in countless places, and in recent years, their influence and violence have increasingly spread to the Western world as well.

Again, the World Upside Down

Knowing this, it becomes clear that Hamas and similar groups are the modern-day kindred spirits of Hitler, essentially, the Nazis of our time. And yet, once again, the world seems upside down: many accuse Israel of doing to others what was done to them during the Holocaust—in other words, of being the new Nazis. But the truth is very different. Even today, Israel continues to face threats from the actual ideological heirs of the Nazis—from those who follow in the footsteps of Hitler and the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, just as in the 1930s and 1940s.

Jew-Hatred Among Muslims

It becomes clear that hatred toward the Jews in the Middle East is not primarily driven by the establishment of the State of Israel. The roots of this hatred lie much deeper—in religious rather than political circumstances. Even if Israel were to disappear completely, radical Muslims would still continue to hate, threaten and kill Jews. Hamas’ repeated calls for its followers to kill Jews around the world (not just in Israel) is clear evidence of that. The Quran contains verses that have been interpreted by extremists as calls to hate Jews and to wage violence against non-believers, including Christians. The real motivation behind this hatred is *jihad*, a religiously inspired worldview that fuels hostility not only toward Israel and the Jewish people, but also toward Christians, Western nations and secular society. This toxic ideology doesn’t stop at Israel’s borders. It is a demonic ideology and deeply rooted belief system that is gaining ground among Muslims across the globe, and it is something Europe and America are increasingly being forced to confront.

Find Oscar Lohuis’ book on Amazon:
<https://www.amazon.it/-/en/Oscar-Lohuis/dp/9082000369>

Facts Speak



HATIKVAH

THE HOPE

Israel’s National Anthem

“Hatikvah” (The Hope) expresses the eternal longing of the Jewish people for freedom in their homeland — the Land of Israel.

NAFTALI HERZ IMBER
Poet, playwright and journalist. A visionary of Zionist ideals, he gave voice to the deep aspiration for return to Zion.

ORIGIN & HISTORY

1878 Poem written by Naftali Herz Imber	1897 Sung at the First Zionist Congress in Basel	1948 Unofficially adopted as Israel’s national anthem when the State of Israel was established	2004 Officially recognized as Israel’s national anthem
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THE HOPE IN OUR HEARTS

“עד תקונו בת שנות התקוה בת שנות אלפים להיות עם חפשי בארצנו ארץ ציון וירושלים”
Od lo avda tikvateinu, Hatikvah bat shnot alpayim, Lihyot am chofshi b’artzeinu, Eretz Tziyon v’Yerushalayim.

- Hope that has not yet been lost
- Yearning to be a free people in our land
- The Land of Zion and Jerusalem



Bringing Hope to Families and Children

The summer months provide valuable opportunities for ministry and outreach. Through the faithful work of Rev Naim Khoury and his church in Bethlehem and Rev Saleem Shalash and his church in Nazareth we spread light to children, families, and vulnerable people. Below are updates from both pastors on how God is working through their churches and how your support is helping make a difference.



Elvira Khoury teaches a Bible lesson.

Rev Naim & Elvira Khoury Hope and Joy for Children in Bethlehem

We thank the Lord for His faithfulness and for your continued friendship and partnership as we do the work of the Lord in this critical time. Your prayers and generous support enable us to continue serving children and families, and we are grateful for the difference you are making.

This summer, more than 170 children took part in our annual Summer Programme. For many of them, these eight days became one of the highlights of their year. The excitement of the children was evident from the very beginning. Many eagerly waited for the church vans to arrive each morning. Some even called ahead asking when transportation would come, anxious not to miss a moment of the programme. Their



Outdoor activities in Bethlehem.



More than 170 children joined this year.

enthusiasm was a great encouragement to our team. Providing transportation for so many children remains a significant challenge. Rising fuel costs have increased expenses considerably, and transporting children from different communities requires a great deal of planning and time. Yet we are committed to ensuring that every child who wishes to attend has the opportunity to be part of the programme.

Each day was packed with activities designed to help children grow in their faith while enjoying a memorable summer experience. Through Bible lessons, Scripture memorisation, songs, games, crafts, and sketches, they encountered biblical truths in engaging and practical ways.

The Bible stories formed the heart of each day. Children listened attentively, memorised verses, asked thoughtful questions, and learned how God's Word applies to their lives. They sang Christian songs enthusiastically and enjoyed creative activities that reinforced the lessons they were learning.

One of the greatest blessings came through the feedback we received from parents. Many shared that their children had begun praying regularly at home. Some started praying before meals for the first time, while others prayed before bedtime and remembered family members and friends in their prayers. Parents also noticed changes in their children's behaviour. Some children confessed wrongdoing and asked forgiveness. These testimonies remind us that God's Word continues to transform hearts. While the fun activities and outings are important, our greatest joy is seeing children grow spiritually and bring what they have learned back into their homes.

As we reflect on this year's programme, we give glory to God for every child who attended, every Bible verse learned, every prayer offered, and every seed planted in a young heart.

Thank you for helping make this ministry possible through your prayers and support.

Rev Saleem Shalash

A Place of Hope in Northern Israel

God is opening new doors for outreach in northern Israel. Over the past years, we have met many people carrying heavy burdens. Some families are facing financial hardship. Others are rebuilding their lives



Rev Shalash and his wife Nisreen.

after war trauma, or loneliness. Others simply need someone who will listen, pray with them, and remind them that they are not forgotten.

This is why the development of a new humanitarian centre (pictured below) in Nof HaGalil is so important to us. For many years, this project has been a prayer in our hearts. Our vision has never been merely to establish another building. Rather, we have longed to create a place where people feel welcomed, valued, and cared for.

The centre will provide practical assistance, encouragement, and support to people facing a variety of challenges. A place where Jewish and Arab families alike can come and experience practical help, encouragement, and genuine human connection.

Thank you for continuing to stand with us through your prayers and support. Your partnership is helping us continue being a light to many people during difficult times.



The new centre in Nof HaGalil.

Pray for the work of Rev Khoury and Rev Shalash and their families. Pray for strength, wisdom, protection and fresh encouragement as they continue serving faithfully.

You can support the important work of these pastors. Please fill out the coupon and select:
Arab Christians.

Any amount is welcome!

