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Understanding Israel and world events from a Biblical perspective

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View of a field of pomegranate trees in Israel. Pomegranates are used in the Jewish ritual of the new year because they supposedly contain 613 seeds, and by eating the pomegranate Jews display their desire to fulfill the 613 commandments written in the Torah. | Photo: Mila Aviv/Flash90

God is Faithful to His Promises

■ Rev Henk Poot

Christians for Israel Netherlands

“See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.” Isaiah 60:2-3

In the end, darkness will cover the earth. And indeed, the darkness has come. A spirit of wickedness is blowing through the world. Here in the West, the name of God has been banished from public life. People wander through the world unconnected to their creator, not knowing where they are going. Some don't even know who they are anymore. Paul writes at the beginning of his letter to Rome: “For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him nor gave thanks to Him”. And in this darkness, hatred and enmity flare up against the people of God. It has even come to the

point where the United Nations is lifting Jerusalem like a burdensome stone. People prefer the lie, no matter how obvious the lie is, to the truth—and even churches cry out that the Lord's inheritance must be broken to achieve world peace. It reminds me of Psalm 130: The longing of God's children for the dawning of the morning in the dead of night. For the morning is coming, that is certain. As true as God lives.

Soon, the Jewish people will celebrate *Rosh Hashanah*, the beginning of the fall festivals. It is a day when even the light of the moon cannot be seen, so dark. But the Lord says: “It is a day for you to sound the trumpets”. Well over a hundred times on this day, the *shofar* will be blown. As a sign that we humans are creatures of God. But also as an alarm call that Israel is surrounded by enemies and that they must put their trust in God (Joel 2:15-17): “Blow the trumpet in Zion, let them say, “Spare your people, O Lord”.

The *shofar* is blown to remind us that God is faithful to His promises and that the Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love (Ps. 103:8). And that He is the judge of all the earth (Ps. 75). Therefore, the Lord says that *Rosh Hashanah* should also be a day of jubilation and joy and full of hope.

Darkness is not the end, and so Isaiah speaks of the light breaking through and the glory of the Lord that will be seen over Israel. We know that the glory of God will be to be seen in Jerusalem when the *Messiah* comes, full of glory, full of grace and truth. As He appears, the *shofar* will sound for the last time.

That is also the message of the coming *Feast of Tabernacles*, the *Feast of Completion*, when His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives and the nations of the world will flock to Jerusalem to worship the Lord, when peace will dawn for Jerusalem and all the world.

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Dream Becomes Reality for Adel



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

Colophon

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Mission

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

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The Nations are Gathering

■ Andrew Tucker

International Editor | Christians for Israel

The city of Jerusalem is a major theme running throughout scriptures. There is the earthly Jerusalem, and there is the heavenly Jerusalem. The earthly Jerusalem is the focus of God's dealings and purposes with the Jewish people. The Bible speaks clearly about a conflict in the last days between the nations of the world and the God of Israel, in which the physical city of Jerusalem plays a central role. This conflict comes to its climax when the Jewish people are (at least in part) restored to the land, and the nations are 'gathered' against Jerusalem (*Zechariah 12-14*). Interestingly, it is the Lord who gathers the nations to fight against Jerusalem (*Zechariah 14:2*), and it is the Lord who fights against those nations (*Zechariah 14:3*).

When Israel was established in May 1948, it was immediately attacked by the surrounding Arab states. By the end of the War of Independence (mid-1949) Israel controlled only part of the former Mandate territory, including the 'western' part of the city of Jerusalem. Jordan occupied (and later tried to annex) East Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria (renaming the latter 'the West Bank of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan'). Under Jordanian occupation, the city was divided into 'West Jerusalem' and 'East Jerusalem', and all Jews were removed from the Old City and its environs.

It is important to note that 'East Jerusalem' is a misleading name, as it comprises the totality of the old city of Jerusalem and its environs—in fact, all the city of Jerusalem before its expansion in the 20th century. East Jerusalem contains all the most important Jewish, Christian and Islamic holy sites—such as the Temple Mount, the Western Wall, the Mount of Olives, and the church of the Holy Sepulcher.

In the Six-Day War (5–10 June 1967), Israel defeated Jordan and took control of the city. Since 1967, the Jewish people have—for the first time since the kingdom of Judah—sovereignty over Jerusalem. Israel has declared Jerusalem to be—and it

in fact functions as—the undivided capital of the State of Israel. The wall that divided the city under Jordanian occupation (1948–1967) was removed. Since June 1967, while there are 'Jewish' and 'Arab' sections of the city, the Municipality of Jerusalem manages the city as a whole.

However, since 1967, international opposition to Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem has grown. In 1980, the UN Security Council declared Israel's reunification of the city to be illegal and ordered all foreign embassies in Israel to be moved from Jerusalem. Today, most states still do not recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital and have kept their embassies in Tel Aviv.

In fact, many UN member states are now demanding (a) that East Jerusalem become the capital of a State of Palestine, and (b) that all Israelis (military and civilians) be removed from East Jerusalem, as well as Judea and Samaria (referred to in the UN as 'the West Bank').

The status of Jerusalem has come to a head through legal proceedings over the past few years at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the UN General Assembly. For decades, many states have been calling for the creation of a Palestinian state on the territories that were occupied by Egypt (Gaza) and Jordan (East Jerusalem and West Bank) between 1948 and 1967. In December 2022, 87 UN member states adopted a resolution calling on the ICJ to issue an advisory opinion declaring that the Palestinian people have a right to sovereignty over East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, and that Israel's occupation of this territory is illegal.

On 19 July 2024, that is exactly what the Court did. An Advisory Opinion was delivered to the General Assembly, declaring indeed that Israel must remove its "presence" in these territories "as rapidly as possible", and that all Israeli "settlements" must be "evacuated".

Early September, on the basis of that Opinion, the UN's Arab Group, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

(OIC)—representing, collectively, nearly two-thirds of the UN's 193 member states—have submitted a resolution to the UN General Assembly. The resolution demands Israel to bring to an end without delay "its unlawful presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory..., and to do so no later than twelve months since the adoption of this resolution". It also demands the "evacuation of all settlers" from the territories.

This resolution thus seeks the division of the city of Jerusalem, and the removal of all Jews from 'East Jerusalem', to pave the way for East Jerusalem to become the capital of an Islamic State of Palestine.

The resolution was adopted on 18th September, during a session of the 'Emergency Special Session' that was pushed through by the Arab, Islamic and Non-Aligned states. 124 states voted in favor, 14 opposed it, and 43 states abstained.

Israel refuses to give up control of Jerusalem and the West Bank without the negotiation of a peace agreement with the Palestinians, as envisaged (and required) by the Oslo Accords. The experience in Gaza since 2007 (Israel withdrew unilaterally from the Gaza Strip in 2005, and Hamas took over control there in 2007) has simply demonstrated that abandonment of territory currently controlled by Israel will inevitably embolden and strengthen Hamas and other Islamist *jihād* groups, committed to Israel's destruction and lead to further terrorist attacks against Israeli citizens.

The stage is thus set for a huge clash between Israel and the United Nations, in which the right of the Jewish people to live in the city of Jerusalem will play a central role.

Let's keep our eyes on Jerusalem, as we see Biblical prophecies being fulfilled before our eyes.

Most importantly, let us pray for the coming of Messiah who will rule over the nations on the throne of His father David (ie. in Jerusalem), in the midst of His people Jacob (ie. the Jewish people): *Luke 1:31-33*.

Prayer Points

Israel

- Many people in Israel struggle with trauma and grief. The reasons are diverse: because family members or friends have been killed, because they have been injured by this war, because people in their families have been taken hostage, or because they have been evacuated. Pray for comfort.

Israel and the Nations

- In July, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued a non-binding opinion: the Israeli presence in the Palestinian territories is considered illegal, and Israel must withdraw from these territories and compensate those affected. This 'legal' opinion is not only politically motivated but is legally unsound and one-sided. Pray that the ICJ may see what is truly just and act accordingly.

- The Iranian regime plays a huge role in spreading and encouraging hatred of Israel and anti-Israel propaganda. Pray that God will put an end to the terror of the Iranian regime.

Christians for Israel

- Give thanks for the work our Christians for Israel team in Ukraine does amongst the Holocaust survivors. The circumstances are difficult, especially in the midst of war. There also is a lot of poverty among the Holocaust survivors. Pray that many people will be helped.
- It is our task to support and comfort Israel (*Isaiah 40:1-2*). Pray that the Churches will stand around Israel in word and deed.

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

Iran-Israel Conflict is Existential

Wim Kortenoeven

Former Member of Dutch Parliament | Middle East Specialist

Iran is about a thousand kilometres from Israel, with Syria and Iraq in between. The countries have no territorial, economic or other 'rational' disputes between them. Nevertheless, the Iranian regime has branded the Jewish state as a mortal enemy to be destroyed.

That Israel must be destroyed has been official Iranian government policy since the Iranian revolution under Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979. Its background is Islamic, and to carry out the death sentence, Iran and a series of allies have created a 'ring of fire' around Israel.

'Little Satan'

Iran's death sentence on Israel is rooted in Shiite-Islamic end-time doctrine. In it, the United States is the 'Great Satan' and Israel the 'Little Satan', that need to be destroyed by Muslims, after which Islamic world peace can be imposed. In the original Shiite dogma, which is much older than the United States, only Israel is the focus of destruction. Israel must be exterminated by an international Islamic force commanded by the mysterious 'hidden' Twelfth Imam, the so-called 'Mahdi'. This Muslim leader, persecuted by other Muslims, is said to have disappeared in an Iranian well some 1150 years ago but will resurface in the end times.

Genocidal Announcement

The Shia death sentence on Israel (and the Jewish people) is irrevocable and dovetails perfectly with similar doctrines in Sunni Islam. One of the best-known of these is this genocidal announcement, based on a statement by Islam founder Mohammed and used by Hamas and other sections of the Muslim Brotherhood: "The time of judgement will not dawn until the Muslims will fight the Jews and kill them; in consequence of which the Jews will hide behind rocks and trees. And every tree and [every] rock will [then] say: 'O Muslim, O slave of Allah, behind me, is a Jew, come here and kill him!'"

The Islamic death sentence on Israel and the Jewish people have been openly and unabashedly propagated for decades, in particular by Iran and all known Islamic terror organisations, but also from mosques in the Western world. Since 7 October last year such propagation has been voiced at numerous US and European universities, with countless non-Muslim 'useful idiots' loudly endorsing the antisemitic verdict.



For residents of northern Israel, the 'ring of fire' is a daily reality. Since 7 October, Hezbollah has been firing rockets almost daily with the aim of causing as much death and destruction as possible. As a result, tens of thousands of residents have had to leave their homes and be relocated. | Photo: Flash90

However, the announced murder of the Jewish state and its inhabitants has not received the international censure and punishment one would expect in the post-Auschwitz era.

The EU and Hamas

In some cases, concrete Islamic-terrorist violence directed against Israel and/or Jews has admittedly been punished by the international community with sanctions. But the underlying unwavering genocidal intentions have generally been disregarded.

For instance, the EU placed the 'terrorist wing' of Iranian-backed Hamas on the European list of terrorist organisations in 2001, after an endless series of horrific bombings of Israeli civilian targets. Only two years and another long series of bloody attacks later, the so-called 'political wing' of the terror organisation was also listed, the ideological wing that preaches and exports genocidal ideology. But that was not mentioned, let alone condemned, when sanctioned.

The European door always remained and remains ajar for Hamas. For instance, if Hamas were to reconcile with the PLO and take its place in a Palestinian national unity government to lead a yet-to-be-founded (second) Palestinian state. The openly genocidal Hamas programme, which incites Palestinian Arabs against Jews and the Jewish state through education and the media, among others, was left untouched in practice. Its propagation and operationalisation was and is even generously sponsored by the EU and its member states, as in the case of the work of the Hamas-collaborating UN agency UNRWA.

Iran Also Went Unpunished

Iran's official genocidal intentions towards the Jewish state were also virtually uncriticised and completely unpunished by the international community. UN and EU sanctions did emerge because of Iran's illegal nuclear weapons programme, as it threatens regional stability and international interests. The EU also imposed sanctions because of the human rights situation in Iran itself and Tehran's supply to Moscow of suicide drones used en masse against Ukrainian civilian targets.

But Iran's death sentence on the Jewish state and its inhabitants has never been put on the agenda for debate or resolution by the UN or the EU. The EU claims to be a 'community of values' and the UN was created to prevent international aggression and genocides. With great regularity, Tehran is visited by European foreign ministers. However, there is no indication that even the slightest displeasure was expressed during those visits by the moral heirs of Holocaust guilt about Iran's intention to finish the job that once begun in Europe.

Indifference

In that climate of international indifference, Iran, by arming and activating Islamist militias, has been able to create a 'ring of fire' around Israel almost unhindered, with the ultimate aim of eliminating the currently militarily and technologically superior Jewish state. Not overnight, but through a relentless war of attrition from all sides that the Jews in the Land of Israel will simply not be able to sustain militarily, politically and economically.

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Short News

Giant Moat Discovered in City of David

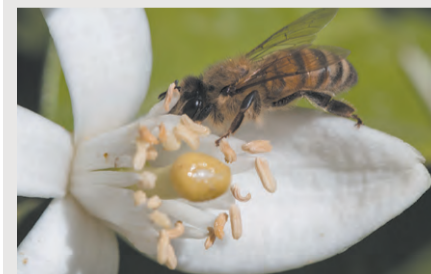


During the extensive excavations taking place at the City of David—the original city of Jerusalem located immediately south of the Temple Mount—a new discovery has been made. Archaeologists found a dry 30-metre moat, which served as a means of defence. The moat separated the Temple Mount from the City of David. According to the Israel Antiquities Authority, the moat was "one of the monumental fortifications that protected the kings of Jerusalem." | Photo: Flash90

UN 'Overlooks' Israel

Seven years ago, the UN declared the 'International Day of Remembrance of and Tribute to Victims of Terrorism' this year on 21 August. To mark the occasion, the visitor centre of the UN's headquarters in New York hosted an exhibition on terror victims across the globe. The aim of the exhibition is to make people aware of the human stories of victims and survivors and the impact of a terror attack. Various terror attacks and countries were featured, but there is no place for Israeli terror victims. Outgoing UN ambassador of Israel Gilad Erdan: "Some terror victims are apparently more equal than others."

Bees and their Diet



An unbalanced diet of honey bees delays the moment when bees start feeding their young, how often the bees feed them and disrupts the care they give to their young. This has been revealed in recent research by Israeli scientists at the Hebrew University. The findings may help ensure that the ever-shrinking bee populations stabilise again. Bees are essential for fertilising crops. | Photo: Flash90

Short News

Twice as Many Gazans Breached Border



Some 7,000 Gazans participated in the Hamas-led Oct7 assault on southern Israel, according to new Israel Defense Forces estimates. That is double the number of Gazans, as previously believed. The data is based on an in-depth investigation conducted by the IDF's Gaza Division. Terrorists breached the border at 119 points, around double the figure of 60 breaches previously reported. Both terrorists and Gazan civilians participated in the mass killing, kidnapping, looting, destruction and other atrocities.

| Photo: Flashgo

Award for ZAKA's Work

Emergency relief organisation ZAKA, which helps in case of terror attacks, accidents and disasters, has received the 2023 Shield Award from Israeli Health Minister Rabbi Uriel Buso and the ministry's CEO, Moshe Siman Tov. Rabbi Uriel Buso said in his speech: "You are all motivated by compassion and a mission. The presence of volunteers ensures that the system will operate correctly and efficiently." Moshe Bar Siman Tov added: "The choice to give the award to you had already been made before 7 October, but is now deserved by the volunteers twice as much."

Red Fabric Identified



A piece of 3,800-year-old scarlet-red textile has been discovered in a cave in the desert of Judea. The find is special because the piece of fabric was dyed red with paint that was made of the scarlet worm, a tiny insect. Its particular colour is mentioned in the Bible. The piece of fabric found is the oldest evidence of fabric dyed with this colour. The fabric was found in the Judean Desert in 2016. | Photo: Israel Antiquities Authority

Anglican Archbishop Insists Israel Surrenders

■ James E. Patrick
Christians for Israel UK

Few were surprised on 19 July when the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued its long-awaited Advisory Opinion that Israel's presence is 'illegal' in the so-called 'Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem'. But more shocking was the statement on 2 August by Anglican Archbishop Justin Welby, in which he not only approved of the ICJ's conclusion, but insisted that governments all over the world act immediately to enforce it.

The Archbishop is from the evangelical arm of the Church of England, and is himself of Jewish descent, with a history of positive attitudes towards Israel and the Jewish people. In 2019, he wrote the foreword to the official Anglican doctrinal paper about Christian-Jewish relations, *God's Unfailing Word*. This paper clearly repented for the history of

Christian antisemitism, rejected replacement theology, and recognised (*Chapter 5, pp. 74-87*) the ancient and enduring connection of the Jewish people to the land, within certain theological limits.

However, Archbishop Justin has evidently been influenced much more strongly in recent years by personal encounters with Palestinian Christians. His statement expresses his agreement with their belief that their 'future and viability' depends entirely on the State of Israel removing itself from 'Palestinian' lands. Yet he seems just as blind as they are to the real reason for Palestinian suffering, especially Christians. Oppressive Islamist rule in those areas has driven out most Christians, while at the same time inciting terrorism against Israeli civilians of all ethnic groups, which only forces Israel to impose more and more restrictions.

Muslim theology insists that any Jewish self-government in that land is

illegitimate and must be resisted by violent means. So the Palestinian submission to the ICJ asserted their 'right to self-determination' from the River Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea. The Archbishop's statement calls for their 'right' to be realised, but he must be unaware that the West Bank is only a first step for them, since they deny Israel's right to exist anywhere in the land.

Most importantly, Archbishop Justin ignores the repeated inclusion of 'East Jerusalem' in the ICJ Advisory Opinion. How could he possibly justify forcing Israel to surrender the Old City to the Palestinians, if he knows that Jews were ethnically cleansed from their holiest places under Jordanian rule (1949-1967)? We must pray for the Archbishop's eyes to be opened to these political but also historical, legal and biblical truths that the ICJ has completely ignored.

Continued from page 3

Iran-Israel Conflict is Existential

The continued burning of the 'ring of fire' must lead to severe and lasting disruption of the Israeli political and social order, to the depopulation of parts of the country (as has already been the case in the north since October 2023) and ultimately to a mass Jewish exodus and the dissolution of the 'Zionist project'. According to the same plan, an operational Iranian nuclear weapon should prevent Israel from attacking the Iranian director of the elimination plan.

The plan was hatched by Iranian general Qassam Suleimani, commander-in-chief of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), which can best be compared to the German SS of the time. Suleimani was eliminated with a targeted missile strike by the United States on 3 January 2020. But in the meantime, Suleimani's successors implemented his encirclement plan.

Peaceful Solution Impossible

The 'ring of fire' is formed by Hezbollah in the north; Iran and a number of Tehran-controlled Syrian and Iraqi militias in the east; Hamas and Palestinian Jihad in the south; the Yemeni Houthis in the southeast; and the PLO and Hamas in the heart of the Land of Israel. This uncompromising coalition arrayed against Israel receives political, financial and organisational support from two state actors: NATO member Turkey and Qatar.



This is one of over 300 rockets Iran fired at Israel last April, hoping to inflict as many casualties as possible. As if by a miracle, not a single missile struck a target. Meanwhile, Iran threatens daily to hit Israel in the heart with a multiple of this number of missiles. | Photo: Flashgo

The Lebanese Shiite Hezbollah movement is the most formidable component of the 'ring of fire'. Founded over 40 years ago by the IRGC, Hezbollah is the de facto ruler in Israel's northern neighbour.

Despite UN resolutions demanding that Hezbollah be disarmed and removed from southern Lebanon, Hezbollah has transformed southern Lebanon into a giant above- and below-ground military stronghold in recent decades. This while under the watchful eye of the UN peacekeeping force UNIFIL, whose sole task was to prevent that from happening. Hezbollah has some 100,000 well-trained and armed men and an arsenal of between 150,000 and 200,000

rockets capable of shelling all of Israel. Like Iran, Hezbollah has exclusively ideological/religious reasons to destroy the Jewish state as well as wanting to commit genocide against the entire Jewish people. Significant is the 2002 statement by Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah: "If they [the Jews] all gather in Israel it saves us the trouble of going after them worldwide."

All things considered, therefore, there is no peaceful solution to this conflict. To survive, Israel is condemned to put out the 'ring of fire' by force and cut off the Iranian head of the snake before Tehran will be able to have operational nuclear weapons.



The Heroes of Israel

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

On 7 October, everything changed. The shock of such a brutal attack against innocent civilians, the savagery of the attack, the sheer numbers of terrorists who crossed into Israel that morning, left us all reeling. The truth is, most of us were not surprised that our enemies could be so evil. But we were shocked that they succeeded in perpetrating their demonic intentions. For years, we heard their vile, hateful messages. We knew that the antisemitic trope *'Protocols of the Elders of Zion'* are best-sellers throughout the Middle East, particularly in the Palestinian areas and in Egypt. We have repeatedly witnessed their vile acts of terror. And yet, we were totally unprepared for 7 October.

For years, our leaders, both political and military, assured us that our intelligence community had eyes everywhere and that an attack was not on the horizon. We were told that Hamas was deterred from opening a large-scale attack and would continue to support sporadic terrorist attacks against individuals, enough to hurt but not enough to cripple. But more importantly, no one believed that Hamas had the strategic and organisational ability to carry out a major attack with thousands of terrorists.

Today we know that there were warning signs, but they were misinterpreted or ignored. Our leaders were blinded by their own success, enamored of the amazing technology Israeli scientists had developed over the years, too arrogant to remember that wars are fought between people. And if there are bad people on the other side of the fence, they will eventually figure out a way to cross the fence and attack the good people on our side of the fence.

Since 7 October, there has been a grave crisis of confidence in our leaders. Some are calling for new elections, others for a complete change in the military echelons. But it is not at all clear that this will change anything. For it is not only the current government who failed us, but governments and Knesset members going back years. So new elections may merely shuffle the deck

but not necessarily effect the profound change that is so needed to gain the nation's confidence once more.

But if there is one thing I have learned this past year, it is that leaders aren't everything. In fact, they can often be a poor representation of the people they supposedly lead. When I look back at this past year, a year, fraught with fear, tragedy, death, and so much loss, I remember the people who truly made a difference, the people who, often while risking their lives, reached out to help others. The people, who despite the media and political focus on what divides our nation, focused on what binds us together as a people. And there is no doubt in my mind, that the people do not hate one another. They are angry and frustrated at a terrible situation. But they look at their neighbors and embrace them as brothers. And those few who spew hatred and division—they are a vocal minority. And if not for social media, we would never even hear them.

So let me tell you about some of the real heroes of Israel.

The Kalmanzon Brothers

On 7 October, as sirens rang out across southern Israel, word began to spread in other parts of Israel that there was trouble down south. Elchanan Kalmanzon was both an IDF combat officer and an intelligence officer. He lived in Otniel, a small community south of Hebron in Biblical Judea. As the attack was underway, he was not called by any of the units he was affiliated with. But a sobering look at the reality enabled him to understand that the south was in trouble and he had to help. He asked his brother to join him, and shortly afterwards, his nephew insisted on joining as well. The three drove down south, and as they passed the dead bodies strewn along the road, they understood that things were even worse than they had imagined.

The Kalmanzon brothers arrived at *Kibbutz Beer* and began their own rescue mission. Grabbing an abandoned army jeep, they entered the *kibbutz* over and over again, fighting against terrorists, arriving at the homes of beleaguered *kibbutz* residents, and started to bring them to safety. They



Israeli President Isaac Herzog with the parents of Yotam Haim at a ceremony in honour of Yotam Haim, Samer Talalka and Alon Shamriz, the three hostages accidentally killed by Israeli soldiers. | Photo: Oren Ben Hakoon/Flash90

ended up saving 100 people that day. At the last house they entered, they were ambushed by terrorists. Elchanan was killed and his brothers were wounded. Elchanan gave his life to save the lives of 100 people that he had never met, who did not share his political views. He gave his life to save his people, his brothers and sisters.

Yotam Chaim

Yotam Chaim was a red head who loved to play the drums. On 7 October he was in his small apartment in Kfar Aza when the sirens went off. Soon afterwards, it became clear that terrorists had infiltrated the *kibbutz* and were going door to door murdering and kidnapping anyone they could find. They found Yotam and kidnapped him to Gaza. He was held in terrible conditions for many weeks. And then one day in December, Yotam and two other young men who were being held with him, managed to escape. They were alone in Shuja'iya, an area of Gaza, without food or weapons for 5 days. When they finally encountered an IDF unit, they tried to communicate with them, to tell them they were Israeli hostages. But the IDF soldiers could not hear them and mistook them for terrorists. The three young hostages were killed by the IDF. There was probably no other story throughout this terrible war that affected us so strongly. To be so close to freedom and then to be killed by friendly fire—what could be more tragic! But Yotam's mother, Iris, emerged as one of the greatest heroes of Israel

today. She spent days crying and screaming from pain and frustration. But then she realised how terrible those IDF soldiers must feel at their horrible mistake. And she sent them a message, telling them she was not angry with them, that these things happen in war. And she concluded by saying: "Don't let this tragedy cause you to hesitate in killing a terrorist." She invited them to visit her when they got out of Gaza for a break and they did. And she hugged each and every one of them.

Since then, Iris Chaim has been a heroic voice for clarity, unity and bravery. She has become a model for so many of us.

These are the stories of just two people who we came to know this year. But there are so many more stories. Stories of young men, like my nephew Amichai, who came back from a holiday abroad to fight in this war. Amichai fell in battle on 1 January. Others rejoined their units even though they had been retired from the reserves.

The Nation of Israel lives. Am Yisrael Chai.

That is not only a popular saying—it is a profound truth. Regardless of our leaders, our people are strong, loving, and brave. They are heroes and they will carry us through.

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).

The UN is Being Used to Eliminate Israel

■ Andrew Tucker

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

The Palestinians, supported by a majority of UN member states, are utilising the United Nations system to force Israel out of the so-called 'Occupied Palestinian Territory', and have all Jews removed from East Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria.

UN General Assembly Resolution

On 9 September 2024, the Arab Group in the UN and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) submitted a draft resolution to the UN General Assembly, calling for Israel's complete and unconditional withdrawal from the West Bank within six months.

The Arab Group, represented by Syria, and the OIC sent a letter to the Presidency of the General Assembly (GA) requesting the "swift resumption" of the Tenth Special Emergency Session of the GA, "to enable the membership to consider urgent follow-up on the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the legal consequences of Israel's policies and practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territories..."

The resolution demands Israel to bring to an end without delay "its unlawful presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, ..., and to do so no later than six months since the adoption of this resolution". It also demands Israel the "evacuation of all settlers" from the territories and "making reparations for the damage caused to all natural or legal persons concerned in the Occupied Palestinian Territory".

Any such resolution would contradict one of the UN's primary objectives: maintaining global peace and security.

Moreover, the text demands Israel's strict compliance with the provisional measures ordered by the ICJ in the case concerning the application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (South Africa v. Israel), aimed at protecting the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip.

It calls on third states to fulfill their legal obligations as outlined in the Advisory Opinion, recognising the Palestinian people's right to self-determination as an *erga omnes* right. Third states are also required to ensure that their nationals, or corporations under their jurisdiction, do not act in any way that implies recognition of, or provides aid or assistance in maintaining, the situation created by Israel's illegal presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Furthermore, it calls for sanctions against Israeli nationals involved in human rights violations against Palestinian residents and the imposition of arms embargoes on Israel.

One-Sided Opinion

In its Advisory Opinion on 19 July, the ICJ advised that Israel's military presence in the so-called 'Occupied Palestinian Territory' is illegal, that the United Nations (UN) and all states must ensure that the occupation is ended 'as rapidly as possible'. Fourteen judges¹ said that all settlers must vacate the territory.

The ICJ Advisory Opinion of 19 July is one-sided, as it



View of the General Assembly Hall of the United Nations in New York City. | Photo by Arie Leib Abrams/Flash90

only focused on Israel's alleged wrongdoings. It completely disregarded Israel's sovereign claims over the territories of British Mandatory Palestine and ignored the acute security threats Israel faces from its enemies, particularly the growing terrorist activity in the West Bank from Hamas and other *jihadi* groups backed by Iran. The Advisory Opinion also failed to assess Israel's reconfiguration of its existential security risks following the horrific Hamas attack on 7 October. The ICJ's legal opinion was the result of the one-sided UN resolution (77/247) and a one-sided advisory opinion process driven by the Palestinians and supported by around 80 states, many of them hostile to the State of Israel.

Six out of fifteen judges of the Court criticised the one-sided nature of the Opinion, especially the Opinion's failure to adequately take account of Israel's legitimate security difficulties. Of these, three judges (Tomka, Abraham and Aurescu) strongly disagreed with the conclusion that the occupation is illegal, and one judge (Sebutinde) said the Opinion is totally flawed, and the Court should not have issued an Opinion at all.

Because of the bias of the questions posed by the UNGA, the ICJ focussed exclusively on Israel's alleged misconduct and failed to answer disputed questions of law and fact fairly. Rather, it has adopted a historical and legal narrative that undermines the sovereignty of Israel as a UN member state and rewards Arab-Palestinian aggression.

Moreover, as some judges noted, the Opinion ignores the realities on the ground. Compelling unilateral Israeli withdrawal opens the door wide for Iran and its terrorist proxies and allies like Hamas, to consolidate their presence in the West Bank and pursue their goal of destroying the Jewish State of Israel.

Specific Criticisms of the ICJ Advisory Opinion

(1) *Occupation, annexation and sovereignty.* The ICJ Opinion ignores Israel's legitimate sovereign claims to East Jerusalem and the West Bank, which are based on the former British Mandate of Palestine (1922). The ICJ disregarded the well-established principle of international law '*uti possidetis juris*', which provides that newly formed sovereign states should maintain the internal borders that their previous territory had

before their independence. The court did not have sufficient evidence or arguments to conclude that the entire territory captured in the 1967 Six-Day War was 'Palestinian' or that Israel had forcibly acquired or attempted to acquire foreign territory during or after the war.

(2) *Self-determination and security.* By calling on Israel to end its military presence in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza without adequate security guarantees, the Opinion rewards aggression and ignores the existential threats posed to Israel by these territories. This approach is more likely to exacerbate tensions in the Middle East than to de-escalate them.

(3) *UNSC Res 242, Oslo Accords and negotiations.* The ICJ's approach undermines the Oslo Accords and the Security Council-sanctioned peace process, which is based on a negotiated solution to all outstanding issues in the conflict, including security, borders, the status of Jerusalem and the settlements.

(4) *Illegality of Israel's practices and policies vs. illegality of Israel's presence.* The ICJ does not provide sufficient grounds for concluding that Israel's presence in the territories is illegal.

Conclusion

ICJ advisory opinions are not binding on the states involved or on third states. Similarly, UN General Assembly resolutions are not legally binding.

Under the circumstances, we recommend that peace-loving nations work to prevent the adoption of any UN resolution declaring Israel's presence in the territories illegal or calling for its withdrawal without a comprehensive peace agreement that guarantees Israel's security and survival. Israel's enemies have already escalated tensions to a breaking point. Any such resolution would contradict one of the UN's primary objectives: maintaining global peace and security.

However, the reality of the United Nations is that the majority of states wish to see the destruction of the Jewish state, and establishment of a Palestinian state.

¹ All except Vice-President Sebutinde.

The Hague Initiative for International Cooperation (thinc.) is a global network of international lawyers who challenge the delegitimation of Israel and promote the fair use of international law. You can support the work of thinc. by making a donation. For more information: www.thinc-israel.org

Celia Survives the Holocaust in Tulchin

■ Anemone Rüger

Project Coordinator | Holocaust Survivors Ukraine

Celia was six years old on that summer day 83 years ago when her childhood ended. On 22 June 1941, German soldiers invaded the Soviet Union. Long before they set foot on Russian soil, they ploughed through the Baltic states, Belarus and Ukraine, bringing violence and suffering to the local Jewish population. 22 June is still a day of remembrance there, associated with painful memories. Christians for Israel's (C4I) Anemone Rüger recently visited Celia in Vinnitsa.

Celia is not sure whether she wants to have a visitor this weekend, especially a German visitor. We haven't met yet, but our Ukraine team has come to see her several times. "Don't worry, Anemone is just like one of us," my colleague Alina reassures her. It works—I'm allowed to visit. I arrive with a flower basket, fresh strawberries, and original Israeli clementines from the market.

Celia looks much more fragile than I remember her from the photo Alina took when she brought her a hot water bottle in a hand-knitted cover with a greeting from us for *Hanukkah*. But she is an excellent storyteller, and the flowers quickly break the ice.

Growing up in the Tulchin Shtetl

Celia grew up in Tulchin, a former Jewish *shtetl* about an hour's drive from Vinnitsa, where more than 5600 Jews lived before the war. Tulchin is very familiar to our team—we would spend a day there on every working trip to hear the survival stories right where they happened.

"In the beginning, nobody believed that such a cultured people as the Germans could pose any danger," Celia begins her biographical report. "That's why my parents, Aron and Leya, didn't go anywhere with us two girls until the very last moment. They finally hired a horse-drawn cart and set off with us eastwards to the nearest train station."

Too Late

But their family of four did not get far. In the next village, they ran into the arms of the *Wehrmacht*. Their escape ended right there—they had to go back. The first bombs were already falling.

"I was six at the time and I remember a lot," says Celia. "I can still see the fighter planes flying low, getting closer and closer to drop their bombs. Where were we supposed to go? The only thing we could do was to run into the field. Mom threw herself over me and my little sister. I remember saying to my mom: 'But Mom, there's so much space here in the field, why do you have to lie on top of us? I didn't understand it until later.'"

Thrown out of their own home

Celia and her family returned to where they had come from—at great risk. "Dad had to hide straight away because the men were deported first," Celia continues. "Mom ran with us girls to the village. It was already night when we arrived at our house. But it wasn't empty—someone had occupied it in the meantime. Little did we know that it was someone from the local auxiliary police. We knocked and Mom explained that we actually lived there. She didn't even ask if we could stay for the night. She just asked if she could quickly take some of our supplies so that she had something for us to eat. But the policeman treated her like a piece

of dirt. He shouted at her to get away. Then he kicked her in the stomach with his boot so hard that Mom fell off the porch. She suffered from this her whole life. Mom started crying, and so did we. We went somewhere and spent the night. My parents had lots of friends in the city."

'Useful Jew'

Most of the Jews from Tulchin and the surrounding area were deported to the Pechora death camp in the fall of 1941 under German occupation. This fate was also looming over Celia's family—unless they could somehow make themselves useful.

"Dad was running the shoe factory. They still needed him, so they let him live," says Celia. "Mom also worked very hard. We were all sent to the Tulchin ghetto together. We were cramped together in a very small space. There was hardly anything to eat.

"One day, back in 1943, they took Dad away. I don't know why. Maybe someone made a complaint. In any case, they took him to the Gestapo cellar. They beat him up so badly that he only lived for a few more hours the next day. Then he died."

In addition to the terrible shock, Celia's mother now had to worry that her family had lost their status as 'useful Jews' after her husband's death and would also be deported.

A True Friend in Need

"Mom had a friend in the village who secretly came to the ghetto every week and brought us something to eat," Celia continues. "Somehow she and Mom worked out that she would take us with her. Her name was Maria. 'I can't promise you that I can save you,' she said to Mom. 'But I'll take the girls with me'.

"Then the time had come. One night she came to take us to safety. Somehow she bribed the guards; I don't know how she managed it. I tried to pull myself together. I was the big sister. But my little sister cried terribly. Mom was crying too. Then Maria took us to the village and hid us."

Saved

"I remember her saying to me: 'From now on, your name is no longer Celia, but Lilia. Do you want to live? Then you have to memorise it!' Then she put a necklace with a cross around our necks. I said to her: 'Aunt Maria, that's not how you wear a cross! You have to wear it under your blouse, very close to your heart!' But she explained to me why we had to wear the cross so that everyone could see it. It was our protection."

Once again, Maria, an unknown righteous woman in the darkest time in history, put everything on the line. This time it was even more dangerous, but she risked a second attempt to free her friend too. The escape was successful.

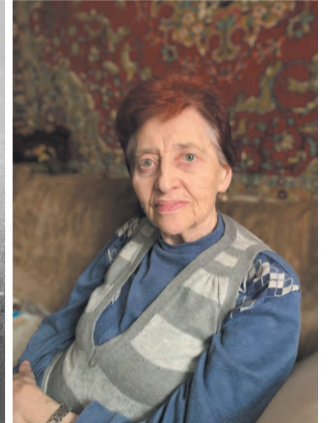
"She first hid Mama with a friend at a horse farm in another town," says Celia. "Mom sat there in the straw for two days. Every time someone came to fetch straw for the horses with a big pitchfork, she held her breath."

Then came the moment when Celia and her little sister Inna saw their mother again. "It's hard to describe our feelings, how happy we were to have Mom back. All I remember is that we ate something incredibly delicious on the occasion."

Maria managed to get her Jewish friend Leya and the



Celia's mother Leya.



Celia. | Photos: C4I



The flowers given to Celia by C4I's Anemone quickly break the ice.

girls safely through the turmoil and danger of the last months of German occupation in the region. The entire family of Celia's father Aron—at least 14 people—perished in the Pechora death camp.

A Memorial for Mom

"I am so grateful to you for looking after us!" says Celia, her eyes radiating great kindness despite all the pain. "I'm always happy when someone comes to visit me."

Growing up, Celia dreamed of becoming a journalist. "I graduated with honours in all my subjects," she remembers. "But when I wanted to enrol at university, they wouldn't let me. Those were the early 50s, the last years under Stalin when things got particularly bad again. They probably didn't like my nationality."

But many years later, Celia did get into writing. Her sister had made *aliyah* and moved to Israel. A competition was announced there in the mid-1990s. They were looking for stories about mothers who had saved their children during the war.

"There has been a lot of talk about the victims who perished in the Holocaust—and rightly so," says Celia. "But what it must have cost my mother to keep us both alive! She gave everything for us. These stories need to be told too! I wrote about Mom back then. I'm so glad that I've created this memorial to her."

Celia picks up a notebook to write down my number. I can see that it is a special notebook—she has written down the telephone numbers of all the Holocaust survivors from Vinnitsa and the surrounding area. Many names have already been crossed out, including those of Rita and her friend Raya, who always told our groups in Tulchin their dramatic stories of survival. But there are still around 20 people like Celia in Vinnitsa who survived the Holocaust in dramatic ways, and we arranged to meet again.

You are welcome to support our work with Holocaust survivors and needy Jewish post-war children with a donation at <https://www.c4israel.org/support-israel/survivors-of-the-holocaust/>

Jews in Muslim Lands—North—Part 4

■ Joanna Moss

In the last article (West) we looked at the experience of Magrebi Jews of North Africa. We saw how vastly different the colonial experience of the French, Italian and Spanish powers and WW2 forces made to the Jewish communities and their choice of final destination once forced to leave.

Now we turn to the North to the countries of Lebanon, Syria and Turkey including the ancient cities of Damascus and Aleppo in Syria and Istanbul in Turkey. The Ottoman Empire was kind to Jews overall. Many *Sephardic* Jews forced out of the Iberian Peninsula were invited to live in major cities across the Empire centred in Istanbul. Lebanon and Syria were part of the French Mandate given by the League of Nations at the same time as the British Mandate for Palestine based on colonial and ancient connections. Today only Jews remain in Turkey.

Syrian Jewry's Proud Heritage

Syrian Jews form such an ancient community they are even mentioned in the Bible. The three main communities were based in Aleppo, Damascus and a smaller one in Qamishi near the Turkish border. The first two maintained close connections with Israel and were very religious regarding themselves as adjacent in importance to Jerusalem and as a centre of scholarship. Scholars translated the *Torah* into Arabic. Syrian Jewry is comprised of both *Mizrahi* Jews called *Musta'arabi* in Syria and *Sephardi* formed when Jews escaped the Iberian Peninsula from 1492 onwards. There was also an ancient small community of Kurdish Jews. Some Italian Jews arrived in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Described as Arabised Jews, they maintained their own customs, had a strong communal identity and cherished their traditions. They were integrated, but not assimilated.

Today Syrian-descended Jews number between 175,000-275,000 and there are 115,000 in Israel (40%), 75,000-90,000 in the USA and 40,000 in Argentina with smaller communities in the UK, Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Panama *et al.*

Many Syrian Jews were merchants and traders moving goods across ancient overland trade routes. This all changed when the Suez Canal was opened up in 1869 and some Jews relocated to Cairo. It marked the beginning of a long exodus as both Aleppo and Damascus declined in importance. Some Jews took the opportunity to migrate to Western countries such as the UK and USA as well as Latin America and this exodus

continued right up until WWI. But the poor remained. The Mandate lasted from 1923-46 followed by Independence. Then came the 1947 UN Israel vote and a pogrom broke out killing many Jews and the Great Synagogue of Aleppo was burnt down including the famous Aleppo Codex, a catastrophe. From 1949-71 there were multiple coups and Jews faced heavy restrictions including being forbidden to get a driver's licence, travel and work in the government and most importantly, leave the country, especially for Israel. Many left illegally but faced torture if they were discovered and families bore the brunt. In the few respite period windows, Jews could leave, but they had to leave all their possessions behind. Life became increasingly unbearable.

In 1973, a Canadian widow called Judy Feld Carr began a risky, clandestine mission over 28 years to support the community and rescue 3,228 of the remaining Syrian Jews mainly through bribery, some were even in prison. In 1992, 4,000 Jews were allowed to leave as long as they didn't go to Israel. Many went to Brooklyn, New York, to join their families. Then in 2016, the last Jews of Aleppo were rescued.

Today the World Centre for Aleppo Jewry stands in Tel Aviv as a testimony to the once-great community. Syrian Jewish hymns and religious traditions are still practiced in the synagogues including a *Hannukiah* with two *shamesh* candles, one for *Sephardic* Judaism. The large, diversity of Syrian food can be found across Israel.

Lebanese Arabised Jews

Jews were one of 23 minority groups in cosmopolitan Lebanon. The community

was never large, perhaps as large as 20,000, but probably around 14,000 centred in Beirut. They were Lebanese first and Jews second and mixed freely with the other groups, but lived in a communal area. Described as Arabised Jews, they maintained their own customs, had a strong communal identity and cherished their traditions. They were integrated, but not assimilated.

Foreign Jews began arriving in Lebanon in 1809 from Akko, then Greece and North Africa from 1837 followed by Syrian Jews and those from Iran and Iraq came 1900-1955 as business and trade opportunities opened up.



Edirne Grand Synagogue on the European side of the Bosphorus strait, is Turkey's largest synagogue and the third largest in Europe reflecting the significant historic size of Turkish Jewry. | Shutterstock

Under the French Mandate Jews were seen as a useful foil to Arab Nationalism, but the Lebanese Christians saw them as an impediment to independence. Jews were becoming squeezed. Post-1948, refugee Jews arrived in Lebanon from Syria and Iraq, but their stay was short-lived. Unlike other countries in the region, the Jewish population increased after Israel's independence.

The first civil war began in 1958; the Jews were safe but rattled. But then the Arab-Israeli wars created a huge, ongoing problem for them. In the 50s there were 7,000 Jews in Beirut. However, most fled in 1967 to escape sectarian violence to the USA, France and Canada. Next came the Second Civil War. In the 1980s the kidnapping of prominent Jews caused more to leave. By the time of the First Lebanon War in 1982, they were a hidden community. Today their community is lost.

Prosperous Turkish Jews

The ancient Turkish Jewish community dates back to the time of Jesus. Numbers were bolstered by the arrival of the *Sephardic* Jews in the late 15th and early 16th centuries, who went on to shape and dominate the community centred in Istanbul. As the Turks were not interested in business, the Jews had free reign to develop commerce and use their global connections. This gave them enormous power and the status as the number one minority group. A head count tax was imposed. Yes, they faced restrictions like other minorities; such as being forbidden to serve in the military, but they were not onerous generally. By the 18th and 19th centuries Turkish Jewish business power was declining, being superseded by the Greeks. In 1923 the Turkish Republic was formed in the aftermath of the

WWI loss. It was then that wealthy Jews sought to find greener pastures elsewhere.

Poorer Jews Forced Out

Things were changing for the Jews. 1934 brought the first pogrom followed by the 1942 wealth tax, so onerous, that many Jews were forced to flee the country. Others were put into camps when unable to pay. A total of 30,000 Jews left.

Although officially neutral in WW2, some 2,500 Jews were deported to European extermination camps and the government denaturalised some Turkish Jews. In past years Turkey has made a play of the positions offered to 500-600 prominent German and Austrian Jews in the Nazi era. In reality, only about 67 came. But those that did made enormous contributions to modern Turkey. Meantime, Turkey became a transit point for European Jews heading to Palestine in the 1930s and 40s. During the period 1923-48, 7,300 Turkish Jews went to Palestine, but over 1948-51, a whopping 34,547 Jews went there amounting to 40% of the community, with 10% returning soon after. Another pogrom occurred in 1955.

Turkish Jews lead the *Sephardic* community in Israel and their use of Ladino has had a powerful effect on this community historically. Turkey was the first Muslim-majority nation to recognise Israel in 1949 and prior to Covid, about 60 flights daily connected the two nations. Trade is very significant between them, but Israeli tourism to Turkey has declined enormously since Erdogan took over. Today the Jewish community is fairly assimilated, low profile and intermarried, numbering around 14,000-20,000 based on which measurement is used.

Av: Tragedy & Triumph, Sorrow & Celebration

■ Rabbi Tuly Weisz

Director | Israel 365

“Thus said the lord of Hosts: The fast of the fourth month, the fast of the fifth month, the fast of the seventh month, and the fast of the tenth month shall become occasions for joy and gladness, happy festivals for the House of Yehuda; but you must love honesty and integrity.” Zechariah 8:19 (The Israel Bible)

The month of Av, the fifth month on the Hebrew calendar, is a month of mixed emotions. In the Bible, it is the month in which the spies brought back their evil report (*Numbers 13-14*).

Aaron, the first High Priest and brother of Moses and Miriam passed away at age 123 on the 1st of Av in the Jewish year 2487 (1274 BCE). It is the only date of passing explicitly mentioned in the Bible (*Numbers 33:38*).

“Aharon the Kohen ascended Mount Hor at the command of Hashem and died there in the fortieth year after the Israelites had left the land of Egypt, on the first day of the fifth month.” (Numbers 33:38)

But it is most well-known for being the month in which the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed (*II Kings 25:8-9*).

“On the seventh day of the fifth month—that was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon—Nebuzaradan, the chief of the guards, an officer of the king of Babylon, came to Yerushalayim. He burned the House of Hashem, the king’s palace, and all the houses of Yerushalayim; he burned down the house of every notable person.” (II Kings 25:8-9)

The name of the month, Av, literally means ‘father’. It is customary to add the Hebrew word *Menachem*, which means ‘comforter,’ to the name of the month because this month is associated with many tragic events, including the destruction of both the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem. Together with this addition, the name of the month means that despite whatever tragedies we might experience, our Father in Heaven is always there to comfort and console us.

Yet the month of Av isn’t all bad. Despite the terrible tragedies that occurred, Av also contains one of the happiest days on the Jewish calendar. According to Rabbi Simeon, son of Gamliel, “There were no greater festivals for Israel than the 15th of Av and *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement).”

How can we make sense of this month? Why does it contain the saddest day of the year as well as one of the happiest?

This progression from intense mourning to great joy finds expression in a number of ways during this month. In addition to the 15th of Av being considered such a happy day, there is a Jewish tradition that the *Messiah* will be born at this time. In fact, the Jewish sages relate that the *Messiah* will be born on the very day when the Temples were destroyed: the 9th of Av. This teaches us that the tragedies and suffering associated with the 9th of Av will turn into joy with the coming of the *Messiah*.

In other words, even at the beginning of exile and the destruction of the Temple, God promises that one day the *Messiah* will come. The statement of the sages is not really about predicting when the *Messiah* will be born, but pointing out that even in total darkness there is light in the distance. Or that contained within the destruction itself are the seeds of redemption.

This movement from destruction to redemption is also



A model of the second Jewish temple in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. | Photo: Wikimedia Commons

expressed in the transition from the 9th of Av to the 15th of the month. The *sages* teach that a number of events occurred on the 15th of Av, including the end of God’s decree that an entire generation of Jews would die in the desert before entering the land of Israel, the permission for members of different tribes to intermarry thus ending a painful division between the tribes of Israel, and a rescinding of the decree made by King Jeroboam that the tribes of the kingdom of Israel were not allowed to make a pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem. The 15th of Av is, therefore, a day of renewal and reconciliation.

The *sages* teach that “when the month of Av arrives, we decrease our happiness.” Although Av is currently a time of mourning, there is hope on the horizon. Redemption is coming soon, and the temporary mourning of the month of Av will transform into permanent rejoicing. As the prophet Zechariah writes:

“Thus said the lord of Hosts: The fast of the fourth month, the fast of the fifth month, the fast of the seventh month, and the fast of the tenth month shall become occasions for joy and gladness, happy festivals for the House of Yehuda; but you must love honesty and integrity.” (Zechariah 8:19)

—Rabbi Tuly Weisz is the founder of Israel365 and the editor of ‘The Israel Bible’, the first Bible dedicated to highlighting the relationship between the Land and the People of Israel. Rabbi Tuly is a columnist for

Israel365news, the Jerusalem Post, Fox News and Newsmax, who writes passionately about Israel, the Bible and Jewish-Christian relations. Rabbi Weisz served as the Rabbi of the Beth Jacob Congregation in Columbus, Ohio before making Aliyah to Israel. Rabbi Tuly lives in Ramat Beit Shemesh with his wife and is blessed with six children.

Confronting the 9th of Av after Oct7

■ Sara Labaton

Shalom Hartman Institute

(An excerpt). In the immediate future, there will be many days and dates that will remind us of 7 October 2023. *Tisha B’Av* will remind us that we are obliged to mourn this latest massacre of Jewish innocents in the same way we have done for other ones, stretching back generations. In late October, *Simchat Torah* will ask us how and when to resume dancing—whether for the *Torah* or for the Nova Festival—after violence disrupts joy. Next April, *Yom HaZikaron* will situate 7 October in a broader narrative about the State of Israel, still vulnerable but with immense reserves of power and success that prior generations of Jews lacked. The period stretching from *Yom HaShoah* through *Yom Haatzmaut* will remind us that in the

middle of the 20th century, Jews re-entered the arena of history with the awesome responsibility that entails. Of course, the date of 7 October, this year and into the future, will serve as a marker for the world and will help us recall that Israel is part of the family of nations.

It will take time and compromise to settle on the most salient meaning of 7 October, for Israelis, for Jews worldwide, for Palestinians, and for the rest of the world. How we commemorate 7 October, and the analogies we deploy to make sense of it, will inevitably shape this process. We must make sure to undertake this task with intention, precision, and responsibility.

Read the whole article on <https://www.hartman.org.il/confronting-the-ninth-of-av-after-the-seventh-of-october/>

Something Big is Going On

■ Bryce Turner

Executive Director | Christians for Israel
New Zealand

In *Zechariah 12*, God declares: “I will make Jerusalem like an intoxicating drink that makes the nearby nations stagger when they send their armies to besiege Jerusalem and Judah. On that day I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock. All the nations will gather against it to try to move it, but they will only hurt themselves.”

‘Intoxicating drink’ has another connotation in much of the world, definitely here in New Zealand. It ideally describes the stupor that so many seem to be in as they protest in support of... well... in support of just about anything that is against Israel. When faced with the absurdity of their claims and shown the blatant lies they parrot, they continue as if... intoxicated. The totally irrational bloodlust that is screamed from megaphones and graffitied on walls reflects an evil insanity beyond

rational earthly explanation.

New Zealand is about as far away from Israel as one can easily go, and yet Israel (mainly anti-Israel) continues to dominate in the news media, in conversation, and in the increasing number of slogans illegally stuck on public buildings. The truth, and respect for factual accuracy or even basic integrity, are totally irrelevant. Watching the political soap operas playing out in countries around the world, most spectacularly in the current USA electoral buildup, it seems obvious: **something big is going on!**

Like so many nations that used to be known as ‘Christian’, those of us who still read our Bible and still listen to God are a rapidly diminishing share of the NZ population. Even smaller—less than 10,000—is the Jewish community here. As followers of the same God, the Jewish and Israel-supporting Christian community grow ever closer as we stand



Israel support march for the hostages in Auckland, New Zealand, 14 September 2024. | Photo: Karin Horin

together in the face of the predicted evil. *Zechariah 9* offers much perspective on the events we are seeing right now.

“But I will defend My house against marauding forces. Never again will an oppressor overrun My people, for now, I

am keeping watch.”

I can’t help but notice also, “Gaza will writhe in agony”.

The end of the race seems to be looming, but rather than sit back and wait—it’s time to sprint to the finish line!

We Love Israel

■ Shanti Pandey

National Coordinator | Christians for Israel
Nepal

Let me start by providing some general perspective on how Nepal as a country sees Israel. In terms of foreign affairs, Nepal has a very good diplomatic country-level relationship with Israel. Nepal has supported Israel internationally since the establishment of diplomatic relationships in 1960. We understand there have been some exchange programmes at the government level where the government has been sending its officials to learn from Israel mostly with defence and agriculture. At the country citizen level, many youths across the country are going to Israel—some going to obtain a good education, particularly in the agricultural sector, to learn valuable farming techniques. Many sustain their livelihood by work within families as caretakers and on agriculture land.

The foundation of my belief is the Holy Bible.

Regarding Christian people and our community, rather than Israel being an aggressor or invader, for most of us there has been a great aspiration to one day, at least once in a lifetime, to visit Israel. We regard Israel as a holy and

promised land chosen by God. We would like to see first hand where Bible events took place and to be present at each and every place where Jesus has walked and other important events in His life.

However, the recent conflict between Palestinians/Gaza with many children casualties has raised some question marks. But again, when it comes to the country ‘Israel’—we simply love the country and always want to stand by its side and continue to pray for Israel and its people, especially the Jews as God’s chosen people. A number of prayer movements are being run in churches and in groups.

Personally, as a Christian, I believe in the Trinity the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The foundation of my belief is the Holy Bible. I believe that the Bible is completely trustworthy and is the word of God that He revealed to the Jewish people. There are a couple of Bible verses that I always remember and ponder when it comes to ‘Israel’. While ‘Jesus’ is the only begotten son of God, Israel is God’s firstborn born (see *John 1:14* and *Exodus 4:22*). Also *Zechariah 2:8*, the great judgement of God upon the nations will eventually come, in accordance with what they have done to Israel, because Israel is the apple of God’s eye. As a believer, we always stand for Israel and continue to pray for Israel and Jews as God’s chosen people.

The Bible Speaks

Zephaniah 3:14-17

*Sing, Daughter Zion;
shout aloud, Israel!*

*Be glad and rejoice with all your heart,
Daughter Jerusalem!*

*The Lord has taken away your punishment,
He has turned back your enemy.*

*The Lord, the King of Israel, is with you;
never again will you fear any harm.*

On that day

they will say to Jerusalem,

“Do not fear, Zion;

do not let your hands hang limp.

*The Lord your God is with you,
the Mighty Warrior who saves.*

He will take great delight in you;

*in His love He will no longer rebuke you,
but will rejoice over you with singing.”*



We find the beginning of this beautiful promise in the Greek translation when the angel Gabriel greets Mary. In the Gospel, Mary, the mother of Jesus, also symbolises the Jewish people, as the Messiah was born from Israel. What is particularly striking about this promise is that God ultimately comes as King among His people. Moreover, the focus is on the great joy—not just the joy of Israel, but the Lord’s own rejoicing over Zion and His people. | Photo: Flashgo

Looking for the Coming of *Messiah*

■ Marie-Louise Weissenböck

Chair | Christians for Israel Austria

I visited Israel a few months ago with a group of young adults from Austria with the intention of listening, helping where needed by doing voluntary work, meeting with families of hostages, soldiers and evacuees and showing our love and solidarity by being present in our beloved Israel, a country in collective grief. That visit deeply impacted me and my fellow travellers. Stricken by the hatred of the world, the first question we were always asked was: "Are you Jewish?" When hearing that we were Christians who had come to Israel during the current war to show our love, resulted in deep and heartfelt gratitude being expressed to us, leaving us feeling very humbled. Standing on the grounds

of the Nova Music Festival, surrounded by photographs of beaming young faces and visiting the memorial of the burnt cars a few kilometres away, made us understand the magnitude of evil and hatred which had overcome Israel on 7 October. Nothing could have prepared me for this. Instantly, *Psalm 121* gained a deeper meaning than ever before. Yes, our help is from the Lord and from the Lord alone, the Creator of heaven and earth. He is our only rock, our fortress and our salvation. When evil shows its ugly face so blatantly, He is our only refuge.

In Austria, we are witnessing a profound change in the relationship between Christians and Jews. More and more pastors have begun to investigate the history of their church and its location and have begun to repent in the presence of the chief Rabbi and local Jews. There



Olim in Kibbutz Or haNer, near Gaza, who have just returned after being evacuated. | Photo: C4I Austria

is a new level of trust and friendship growing, and more and more Christians are beginning to realise that we have much more in common than what

divides us. We need each other. We both are longing for peace and the coming of Messiah, who will bring peace on earth and an end to war and suffering.

Israel Shall Be Saved



The Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem with the Hurva Synagogue. | Photo: Shutterstock

■ Frank van Oordt

Executive Director | Christians for Israel Netherlands

"But Israel shall be saved by the Lord With an everlasting salvation; You shall not be ashamed or disgraced Forever and ever." Isaiah 45:17

In September I was privileged to open a new wing at the Shalva Centre in Jerusalem together with Dutch Chief Rabbi Jacobs. Funds for the wing were raised last year to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the State of Israel. Care of the most vulnerable people at this institution sets an example for the whole world. The new ward was built during the current war and was named after my father, Karel van Oordt, the founder of Christians for Israel. I had been asked to pick the text for the plaque, and chose the text above. We see the restoration of Israel and words of the prophets come to life. For better, but also for worse. On 7 October, the whole world saw evil without a mask. The

consequences are visible every day. The text from Isaiah is in the chapter where Isaiah prophesies about King Cyrus, under whose command the Jews returned from Babylon. A decision of the leaders of the world underlies the restoration of Israel. Similarly, decisions of the nations underlie the creation of the State of Israel. Against the odds, the Jewish state is developing to this day. The shock of 7 October has plunged Israel once again into a struggle for its existence. World leaders are focusing on the Heartland: Judea and Samaria and, above all, Jerusalem. Will Jews be allowed to live there? Can the Hurva Synagogue, which is filled with people every *Shabbat*, remain a Jewish place of worship? The text from *Isaiah 45:17* speaks of endless redemption. It does not come from people; it comes from the Holy One of Israel. When God gives the King His jurisdiction, and He will judge, the mountains will bear peace and the hills righteousness. That is the sure hope we look forward to.

The Tide Will Turn

■ Luca Hezel

Executive Director | Christians for Israel Germany

7 October saw not only the unleashing of the kind of genocidal Jew-hatred that many deemed extinct at long last after the Holocaust but also brought the intense spiritual conflict engulfing Israel, Jerusalem and the Temple Mount into the open.

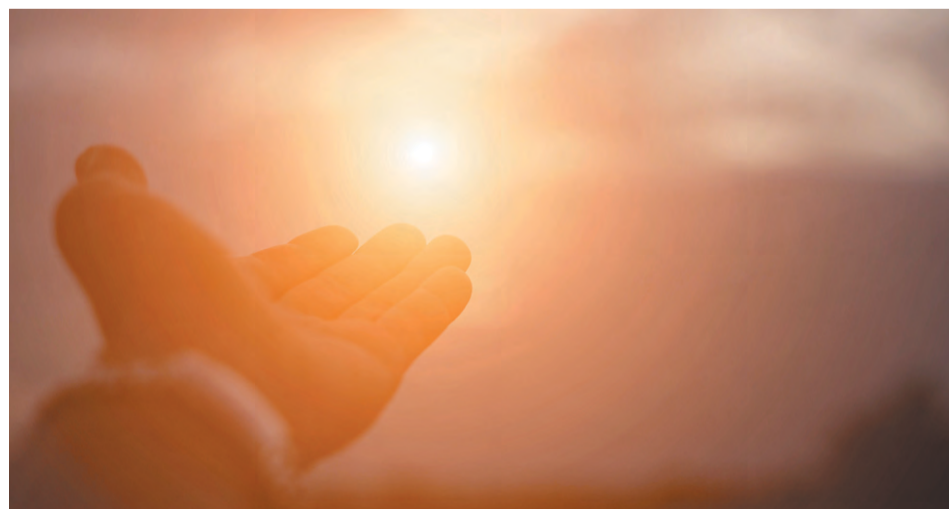
The stark reality that became visible in its aftermath not only revealed evil forces at play but also the existence of good forces: Real friends such as many Christian believers worldwide and the functioning of the Abraham Accords, which on 13 April received their baptism of fire in defending Israel against Iranian missiles, drones and cruise missiles.

But the overwhelming majority of nations and people on earth currently

still view Israel in a negative light, and the United Nations, in their systemic bias against the one Jewish State, tries to tighten the screws, shackle and corner Israel in its fight for survival.

The general trajectory and prospects of the chain of events unfolding before our very eyes since this decisive 'black Sabbath' would be decidedly negative from an Israeli and Jewish perspective; if not, the Word of God would give a clear testimony that the tide will be turned! In *Zechariah 2:14-15* the prophet encourages the Jewish people that ultimately Messiah will come to their rescue:

"Shout and be glad, Daughter Zion. For I am coming, and I will live among you," declares the Lord. "Many nations will be joined with the Lord in that day and will become My people. I will live among you, and you will know that the Lord Almighty has sent me to you."



| Photo: Shutterstock

Too Many Church Leaders Remain Silent

■ James E Patrick

Christians for Israel UK

The past year since 7 October in the United Kingdom has been distressing in many ways, especially the slander against Israel and resulting attacks on our Jewish citizens. The huge public anti-Israel protests, masquerading as pro-Palestinian, have intimidated not just the Jewish community but also fair-minded British people all over the country. But that is where a seed of hope can be found.

A church leader I know well, who has not been known for pro-Jewish statements, admitted in the first church prayer meeting after 7 October that he could feel the hatred in a local protest even as he cycled past. For the first time, he led the church in a focused time of prayer for protection over the Jewish

people. And a few weeks later, he himself attended a three-hour seminar I gave on “A biblical view of the war in Israel”. He thanked me afterwards, saying, “It blessed me being there! It was very informative, and I’m so glad I came along.” He was pleased that I would be joining a solidarity march against antisemitism in London.

Far too many church leaders remain silent, misled by the media and afraid of causing division in their congregations, but I sense a growing grass-roots support in the UK for the Jewish people. More contacts are being made between Christian and Jewish leaders, more help is being given to support *aliyah*, sadly increasing from the UK, more prayer is happening, and the church is waking up to the need to speak truth regardless of persecution.



Illustrative photo. | Shutterstock

Just as Israel is being forced to depend on God alone for protection, the church is entering a season of purification so that it stands on God’s word without

bowing to the world. Times of shaking are sent to fix our trust firmly in the coming unshakable kingdom of God.

Love Hashem

■ Mandy Worby

Christians for Israel Australia

The first prayer Jewish children learn is *Shema*. “Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)

The next verse, 6, is God commanding His people to learn those words and embed them on their heart. This love of God would keep their heart, mind, soul and strength focused on God and Him alone, not wasting their faith on the world and their false gods.

Throughout most of 2023, we were heartsick over the friction and fighting between Israelis over the tribalism of the political left and right, and as each month passed, it only got worse. The concern was that Israel was heading for civil war, and Ian (my husband) and I were so worried about where Israel was heading.

Then, 7 October happened. The arguments on the left and right vanished overnight. Israelis united, and they became a force against the world. We were devastated by Oct 7 but so encouraged by the Israeli response and national unity, reaching out to help each other, and their politics was insignificant.

Right now, God’s people are almost back to the state they were in on 6 October 2023, tearing each other apart over political ideologies... left vs right... and it’s become dangerous. They are at war, and their enemies are watching, laughing and waiting for another chance



Jewish man holding Tefillin. | Photo: Shutterstock

to strike, repeating 7 October.

Again, our hearts are breaking over the growing divide in Israel. Some have asked where God was on Oct 7... He was right there among His people calling on them to remember His initial command... Hear O Israel... the Lord is God, the Lord is one. Love *Hashem* with every ounce of your being, because the obvious fact is that Israel can’t and shouldn’t put their trust in the nations of the world.

We can’t change the attitude of the world, that’s God’s domain, we can only change our own.

It’s our prayer that God will turn the hearts of all His people to Himself, and that they’ll remember *Shema* and once again, embed their love for Him in their heart, and turn to Him for wisdom, guidance and protection.

As Messiah said, “I say to you, you’ll not see Me until you say, ‘blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!’” Matt 23:39

Good will Triumph

■ Siew Fong

Christians for Israel Singapore

The 7 October 2023 massacre triggered daily and then weekly prayer meetings for Israel in our church in Singapore. We had to learn very quickly to intercede for a people embroiled in a war marked by a deluge of disinformation, distorted values and unimaginable wickedness. Today, the Israel-Hamas war is in its 334th day with no end in sight.

Are we in despair? Absolutely not! Because we realise that many prophecies are being fulfilled right before our eyes. We are confident that good will eventually triumph over evil as God unfolds His redemption plan for the world. We are horrified that tens of thousands turn up at anti-Israel

protests chanting “From the River to the Sea”, calling for the nation’s annihilation, but this global opposition against Israel had been prophesied by *Zechariah 12*. And in *Joel 3*, we read that God will judge the world for dividing His land— exactly what the United Nations intend to do with its ‘two-state solution’.

Despite the ongoing war, more Jews are returning to Israel than before, fulfilling God’s promise to regather His people back to Israel. The stage is being set for the return of our *Messiah* for the final showdown with the god of this world. We know Jesus will certainly win!

Therefore, we press on, watching and praying towards that glorious day!



Panoramic skyline view of the Old City of Jerusalem. | Photo: Shutterstock

Recommended Viewing

Take Three Faiths by Joanna Moss

Making a documentary centred on an evolving issue requires quick action and a great deal of cooperation once the storyline is chosen. Third party film can be used to solidify the story, but you never know what will transpire. Sometimes the significance evolves, more so when key issues such as life and death are the subject.

Mourning in Lod is a documentary about three families in Israel with the three monotheistic faiths interacting, illustrating how each family expresses their cultural roots as well as their religion. American documentary queen filmmaker, Sheila Nevins, found the story and chose Israeli Hilla Medalia to make it.

The Arab Christian community is a tiny one in Israel. That is why it is so unusual for an Israeli documentary to feature all three monotheistic faiths. But in *Mourning in Lod* we see them in daily life and in worship, in death and mourning and in their attitudes towards each other, forgiveness and justice. They couldn't be more different.

Set in Lod, during the riots in 2021, it shows how intertwined Jews' and Arabs' lives can be. Lod is one of five mixed cities in Israel. The opening scenes show the riots and explore the midnight death of Musa Hassuna by a 'settler' who is subsequently acquitted on trial in self-defence, as told by Musa's widow. What was he up to? The next day, Yemenite Jewish electrician Yigal Yehoshua's car is struck by a rock in revenge, and he is killed. Later, Musa's family members are arrested and held for a long period pending trial. Yigal was a customer of Hassuna's electrical store, and the families knew each other. His body is placed on life support, and his Russian wife and family decide to donate his organs as many do. By traditional Jewish custom, the body must be intact when the *Messiah* returns, so this organ donation decision is shielded from Yigal's mother. Enter the Jerusalem-based Aweis Christian family with Randa, the matriarch awaiting a kidney transplant. Randa's daughter decides they must all go to Yigal's 30-day anniversary ceremony at the Yemenite synagogue to thank the family. At the conclusion, the Arabs angrily continue crying out for justice stuck in their grievance, the Jews mourn but focus on life and marvel at the equality of mankind—a Jewish kidney in an Arab body, and the Christians give thanks to God and man.

View on Fubo TV, Paramount+ & Apple TV.

The Word of the Lord

■ Benjamin Philip Director | Hineni Soup Kitchen

Dear friends, as a practising Jew and director of the NGO Hineni in Jerusalem, I would like to share with you some of my thoughts concerning the current situation in Israel today.

According to the Jewish interpretation of the Prophets, the time before the final redemption will include periods like the times of Pharaoh. In those days, the Lord said to Moses, *"Come to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, so that I may place these signs of Mine in his midst. And in order that you tell into the ears of your son and your son's son how I made a mockery of the Egyptians, and [that you tell of] My signs that I placed in them, and you will know that I am the Lord."*

As predicted, the nations have hardened their hearts against Israel like Pharaoh.

Even after the brutal killings of 7 October, many nations failed to condemn this brutal attack and continue to support Iran, its proxies, and terrorist organisations, while Israel's allies are restraining Israel in its defence.

In addition, the United Nations General Assembly has adopted 140 resolutions criticising Israel over its treatment of those who want to destroy Israel. Also, the United Nations Human Rights Council has resolved almost as many resolutions condemning Israel as the rest of the world combined, followed by a series of rulings by the UN International Court of Justice.

In short, the whole world is complaining that Israel is not acting in accordance with UN resolutions and the political, moral and ethical standards of the rest of the world.

Something that has been going on since Biblical times, whereby Israel has always been accused of acting extremely different, beginning with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who refused to take part in the worldwide ancient cultures of idolatry, child sacrifice, and other pagan practices.

Instead, Jews worshipped only one God by following His divine principles that guided them through the ancient pagan world and allowed them to survive thousands of years of oppression, expulsions, persecutions, and even a Holocaust by those same nations that are accusing Israel today.

This, while the divine principles that made us Jews so different for thousands of years, has become the basis of all major religions, nations, and modern ethical thinking worldwide, with a desire for justice, dignity for human life, social responsibilities, and peace.

Those values are the true Jewish legacy of contribution to those same pagan nations that have tried to destroy the Jewish people generation after generation for thousands of years and continue accusing Israel until today. Those nations are witnessing the fulfilment of the Biblical prophecies of the Jews returning to their promised land, from where they are again making significant contributions to the world, including its enemies, through its developing of world-changing technologies, innovating high-tech sector, advancement in science, medicine, agriculture, energy, communications, etc.

Despite these significant contributions, Israel and the Jewish people are being treated by the nations, in the same way as Pharaoh did in his time, confusing

many people in Israel and in Jewish communities worldwide and leaving many Jews to think that after 2000 years, perhaps appeasement to those nations and replacing their Biblical divine principles with the code of Humanism will bring acceptance or peace.

However, remember that after God hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and now also the nations, He placed His signs in their midst, in order to make a mockery of the Egyptians, and so also the nations, so that all will know 'that He is the Lord'.

"And it shall come to pass on that day that I will make Jerusalem a stone of burden for all peoples; all who bear it shall be gashed, and all the nations of the earth shall gather about it." Zechariah 12:3

Therefore, we Bible-believing people, Jews, and Christians worldwide, must continue reading the Bible and praying to God. Only by doing so can we gain understanding, truth, comfort, hope, and strength, allowing us to be strong and to trust God, while inspiring Jews and Christians who may otherwise assimilate under the banner of 'Humanism'. Bible reading and prayer will remind them that God is testing us all with a world not unlike that of Noah and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Only our return to God and living by His divine principles can bring salvation and restore our world to its true divine purpose. Then (*Mica 4:2*) many nations shall go, and they shall say, "Come, let us go up to the Lord's mount and to the house of the God of Jacob, and let Him teach us of His ways, and we will go in His paths," for out of Zion shall the *Torah* come forth, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

These are some thoughts of a simple Jew who lives in Jerusalem.

Facts Speak

Hamas in their Own Words

Hamas is a terrorist organisation driven by genocidal racism against Jews. Their goal is to destroy Israel. Don't believe us? Take their word for it:

- "Now Hamas will discuss when we will wipe out Israel!" — *Yahya Sinwar, Hamas leader*
- "We must attack every Jew on planet Earth! We must slaughter and kill them." — *Fathi Hammad, Senior Hamas official*
- "For the Palestinian people, death has become an industry... This is why they have formed human shields of the women, the children, the elderly, and the *mujahideen*, in order to challenge the Zionist bombing machine. It is as if they were saying to the Zionist enemy: 'We desire death like you desire life.'" — *Fathi Hammad, Senior Hamas Official*
- "The Israelis are known to love life. We, on the other hand, sacrifice ourselves. We consider our dead to be martyrs." — *Ali Baraka, Senior Hamas Official*

- "Jews are the vilest and most despicable nation in history." — *Marwan Abu Ras, Hamas official*
- "Oh Allah, bring annihilation upon the Jews." — *Sheikh Dr Hamad Al-Regeb, Hamas official*
- "We will take down the border and tear out their hearts from their bodies." — *Yahya Sinwar, Hamas leader*
- "Hamas has just one 'no'—no to the existence of Israel." — *Osama Hamdan, Senior Hamas official*
- The October 7th massacre, "is just the first time, and there will be a second, a third, a fourth, because we have the determination, the resolve, and the capabilities to fight... The existence of Israel is illogical." — *Ghazi Hamad, Hamas official*
- "October 7th paved a wide highway towards the removal of Israel" — *Khaled Meshaal, Hamas leader*

Share these quotes with anyone who thinks Hamas is massacring Israeli civilians to 'resist' any specific Israeli policy or action.

Believing Without Israel

One New Man—Part 13

■ Rev Cornelis Kant

Executive Director | Christians for Israel International

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

Paul continues his argument in his letter to the Ephesians, saying: “That He might create the two in Himself into one new man, and so make peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, on which He killed enmity. And at His coming He proclaimed peace through the Gospel to you who were far off, and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. So you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but fellow citizens of the saints and household members of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, of which Jesus Christ Himself is the cornerstone” (Ephesians 2:14-20). Here Paul speaks of two becoming ‘one new man’, and of becoming ‘fellow citizens of the saints’. Surely that sounds like two becoming one now. Through Him, both have access to the Father. Surely you would say that the expression ‘enlargement theology’ would apply here. So how does that apply precisely?



| Photo: Flash90

We have previously seen that all Israel will be saved because its Redeemer too will come from Zion. And that is Jesus Christ.

With the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus, and through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the Christian church was added alongside Israel. Messianic Jews (Jews who believe Jesus is the *Messiah*), together with Christians from the nations, now form a new body: the church, the congregation, or the Body of Christ. All other Jews, and that is the vast majority (also called the ‘Israel according to the flesh’), are excluded. Messianic Jews then actually have a dual position: by their faith in Jesus they belong to the Body of Christ, and by their being Jews they also belong to the people of Israel. Those who adhere to enlargement or fulfilment theology now say that only Messianic Jews still belong to God’s (new) people. All other Jews are excluded and can only be saved through faith in Jesus.

Israel as God’s eternal covenant people, over whom God will always have mercy again, has then effectively been dismissed. The mistake made here is to assume that with the coming of the Christian church, Israel would have been finished. The age-old classical doctrine of replacement is apparently deeply embedded in our thinking and hard to dispel. Israel and the church both exist before the face of God. Jews do not transfer to the Christian church. No, on the contrary, we have become fellow citizens of the saints (the Jewish people). Although there remains a difference between a wild branch and a natural branch. We have previously seen that all Israel will be saved because its Redeemer too will come from Zion. And that is Jesus Christ.

Veil Removed

Most Jews cannot (yet) recognise that Jesus is the Messiah. Paul says there is a partial hardening regarding Jesus over the Jewish people. In several passages in the Bible, we read that this veil or hardening is something that is part of God’s plan in a sense that is unfathomable to us. One day, that veil will be removed—for the salvation of Israel itself. The prophet Zechariah also speaks of this: “I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn

for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn” (Zechariah 12:10). It is particularly impressive to note here that the Spirit which God will soon pour out on His people will not be one of punishment or judgment, but a Spirit of grace and prayers. What a glorious prospect for Israel. And even recorded centuries before Christ.

Our Christian Veil

We make a big mistake if we think that only the Jewish people have a veil. Replacement theology has brought a huge blanket over Christianity over the centuries and up to the present day. Almost no church or congregation is exempt from it. We need our eyes to be opened and the veil over God’s plan of salvation with Israel to be removed. By the way, the Bible also speaks very strikingly about our veil:

“The Lord of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain; a banquet of aged wine, choice pieces with marrow, and refined, aged wine. And on this mountain He will swallow up the covering which is over all peoples, even the veil which is stretched over all nations.” (Isaiah 25:6-7). Soon, when the Kingdom comes, at the great wedding supper, the Lord will remove the veil that still covers us as nations. Then we will witness fully what we do not yet see. What a great prospect.

A Father in Heaven

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

Jesus reminds His disciples of the most intimate relationship God has with Israel. Israel knows God as Father. This is how God made Himself known when Israel was in bondage in Egypt. “My son, My firstborn is Israel” (Exodus 4:22). God himself reminds Israel of this: “Out of Egypt I have called My son” (Hosea 11:1). And in Deuteronomy 14:1, Moses tells Israel, “You are the sons of the Lord your God.”

In other words, God’s fatherhood points to His love for His people, whom He delivered from slavery.

In Jewish prayers, God is frequently addressed as Father. That was true then and it is still true today. Even the early rabbis in the *Talmud* taught that you should turn your heart to your Father in Heaven.

In Jewish prayers, the composition ‘Our Father, our King’ often appears, as for example in the prayers of *Rosh Hashanah* (Jewish New Year). In these prayers, God’s love and God’s care for our existence is professed. God is a Father who knows all our needs. And to cite another contemporary example, the prayer for the State of Israel begins with the words “Our Father in Heaven, Rock of Israel and her Deliverer.”

Heaven, of course, is the dwelling place of God. By New Testament times, it had even become a

designation for God because then, as today, the Jews did not pronounce the Name of God. Hence when Matthew is talking about the Kingdom of Heaven, he always means nothing but the Kingdom of God, God’s rule in heaven and on earth.

Jesus teaches his disciples to pray: our Father. When you pray, you are never alone. You pray in common with others, even if you pray in your inner room (see *Matthew 6:6*). As noted before, God is Israel’s Father. When Jesus teaches His twelve disciples to pray to God in this way, it is also first and foremost a prayer of Israel. So when we pray this prayer, we pray with Israel, with trepidation, in wonder and in gratitude for His grace.

Jesus Christ—Coming to Stay A Look at Zechariah 14

■ Kameel Majdali

Director | Teach All Nations Inc.

“Your kingdom come. Your will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” Matthew 6:10

We recite this line every time we say the Lord’s Prayer. Do we understand what it means? We are asking... and declaring... that God’s kingdom is coming to earth, and that God’s will can override the will and ways of temporal earthly rulers. Just like it is in heaven.

Yet you can’t have a kingdom without a king. So in praying for the ‘kingdom to come,’ we are also implicitly asking for the Lord to come, too. Finally, you have to have a capital headquarters for the king and kingdom. Without question, it can be only one place: Jerusalem, the City of David, the City of God, and the City of the Great King (*Psalms 48:2; Matthew 5:35*).

Scripture is clear that God is coming to the earth. *Psalms 96:13: “Let all creation rejoice before the Lord: for He comes, for He comes to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth.”* God is going to judge the earth but not from His heavenly throne. He is coming down and judging earth from earth. See also *Psalms 98:9*.

“For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle” Zechariah 14:2

While God is a master delegator, using angels and anointed people to carry out His will, Scripture teaches that God is personally coming to earth to fight, win, judge, and reign. His coming is more than a courtesy call; He is coming to stay.

One potent passage of Scripture about the personal return of the Lord to earth is found in *Zechariah 14*. A parallel passage is *Revelation 19*, where the ‘coming of the Lord’ equates to ‘the coming of Christ.’ If you recall, in *Zechariah 12*, God would make Jerusalem a ‘cup of trembling’ to the surrounding nations and a ‘burdensome stone’ for all people. A humble city of stone at the fringe of the Persian empire during Zechariah’s day, he foresaw 2,500 years ago that the holy city would become an international obsession. Modern history has borne this out.

Zechariah 14 starts with the phrase: *“Behold, the day of the Lord comes” (14:1)*. This special day represents the transition from the rule of man to the reign of God, culminating in the Lord’s coming to earth. Jerusalem will be the centrepiece.

“For I will gather all nations against



Sunset sky over fields of the Biblical Ajalon Valley, mentioned in *Joshua 10*. | Photo: Shutterstock

Jerusalem to battle” (14:2). Just as God put a hook in the jaw of Gog and brought him forth to his swift demise (*Ezekiel 38:4*), so the Lord will gather the nations to battle against Jerusalem, and it will be their undoing. The continuous and growing global antagonism—and antisemitism—against modern Israel will turn into military action. It will be a bloodbath.

“Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle” (14:3). This is a remarkable scenario: first, the Lord will gather the nations to attack Jerusalem, which they do; then, He personally comes down and fights against those nations. The Lord knows how to fight and win. During the Israelite conquests of Canaan under Joshua, the Lord promised to be with them, go before them, and fight on their behalf. On the day that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still at Gibeon and the moon over the valley of Ajalon, it says in *Joshua 10:14: “And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened to the voice of a man: for the Lord fought for Israel.”* God promises to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem (*12:9*).

- Could it be that preceding the divine intervention in the battle for Jerusalem, the people of the city will receive the spirit of grace and supplications, look upon Him whom they pierced, and mourn for Him as their only son (*12:10*)?
- Could this be the time Jesus foretold that Jerusalem would not see Him again

until it said *“Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord” (Matthew 23:39)?*

- Is this the time that *“And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (Romans 11:26; Isaiah 59:20)?*

Then the most amazing things happen. After the Lord wins the battle for Jerusalem:

- He makes a victory ascent on the Mount of Olives, just east of the Old City. Great topographical changes occur: the mountain splits in two (*14:4*)
- From the Mount, living water flows westward to the Mediterranean and eastward to the Dead Sea (*14:8*).
- People will flee like in the aftermath of the great earthquake in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, *“and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with You” (14:5)*.
- It shall be a unique day, not the normal day and night cycle, for light will shine in the evening (*14:6-7*).

Then, the most important event happens. It is the answer to all our prayers, hopes, longing, and desires. *“The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever” Revelation 11:15*. No more crime, corruption, royal commissions, heavy tax burden, abuse of power, unrighteous rule. The Lord’s prayer has been answered, because:

“And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one.” (14:9)

God the King and His kingdom have come... to stay.

Biblical Roots By David Nekrutman

Hineni

Since 7 October, I have been in triage mode in providing protective equipment to our first responders, humanitarian assistance to the survivors, and rebuilding some of the *kibbutzim* near the Gaza border. Christians for Israel has been a vital partner in these endeavours.

It was important for me, from the outset, that the communities who personally went through the worst tragedy since the Holocaust and the people protecting the country know that Jews and Christians, working together, have helped them. At this moment, we are bringing the residents of Kibbutz Kerem Shalom back home after living in hotels and temporary housing for nearly a year.

In grappling with why the Bible provided all the intricacies in building the Tabernacle, Rabbi Dr Jonathan Sacks of blessed memory provided an incredible revelational insight—*“It is what we do for God that transforms us.”* The building of the Tabernacle demonstrated the willingness of a nation to provide their generosity and skill. No one complained! In fact, the skilled workers said to Moses, *“The people are bringing more than enough for doing the work the Lord commanded to be done” (Exodus 36:5)*.

Until the directive of building the Tabernacle, every crisis was addressed by a miracle or Moses. When a perceived calamity hit the nation, they would rely on a miracle or their leader. When the predicament was not immediately addressed, they would complain. It took a building project to bring a nation together and glorify Him.

From a biblical perspective, we need to see ourselves as co-architects, under the sovereignty of God, in creating a just nation. The elaboration of the intricacies in the construction of the Tabernacle shows us that everything counts when we are building together.

In the context of rebuilding after 7 October, Rabbi Sacks’ revelational nugget was brought to life each day. Jews and Christians viewed themselves as co-architects in this ‘construction project.’ Socks, battery chargers, flashlights, garbage cans, various kitchen appliances, medical gear, farming equipment, portable toilets and showers and even kosher beef jerky were just some of the items that were needed since the beginning of the war. Nothing was too small or insignificant for people to help with the cause.

We will probably never know all the stories of individuals who helped Israel during this time. Thank God, He has the eternal memory to record these accounts. What I continue to witness every day is His spirit moving in people and their willingness to answer the call of what Abraham once said to God—*Hineni* (here I am).

Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkot

■ Kees de Vreugd

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

Israel has three special celebration times in the autumn: New Year, the *Day of Atonement* (Yom Kippur) and the *Feast of Tabernacles* (Sukkot). *Rosh Hashanah* (New Year) derives from the Biblical 'day of the trumpet blast' (*Leviticus 23:24*), which heralds the seventh month. So why New Year? Because then is the beginning of the Sabbatical and Jubilee years. In these two years, significant actions take place benefitting personal relationships within Jewish communities. The New Year also marks the beginning of the liturgical year (the festive calendar) beginning in spring with the month of *Nisan*, in which *Passover* falls.

New Year's Day is a solemn day, the day of divine judgement, and the beginning of ten days of repentance, during which divine judgement can still be reversed. *Yom Kippur* is the day when judgment becomes final. However, Israel knows that God is not only righteous but also merciful and hears our prayer. The long-drawn *shofar* blast with which *Yom Kippur* is concluded sounds like the trumpet of redemption. That is why *Yom Kippur* is a holy holiday, even though it is a full day of fasting with prayers that are full of awareness of guilt and shortcomings.

Immediately after *Yom Kippur*, preparations begin for *Sukkot*, which begins four days later in the evening. A tabernacle is built as a meagre shelter for a week: for seven days, you leave the comforts of your home behind and sit in the tabernacle, with only a canopy over your head, through which you can see the sky. This recalls Israel's journey through the desert because there man lived in utter dependence on God. When the apostle Paul speaks of the earthly tent (*2 Corinthians 5*), we are reminded of the tabernacle.

But *Sukkot* is not a sombre and subdued feast. On the contrary it is full of exuberant joy. There is a Biblical



Jewish children learning about the customs of *Sukkot* at a kindergarten. | Photo: Yossi Aloni/Flash90

command for this feast (*Deuteronomy 16:14-15*). Like the other two pilgrimage festivals, *Passover* and *Shavuot*, *Sukkot* is also originally linked to the harvest. In Israel, this is the conclusion of the season of fruit and especially grape harvests. The winter season begins when the rains fall.

It is remarkable that the feasts of autumn are not reflected on the Christian calendar. We celebrate Easter and *Pentecost*, which correspond to *Passover* and *Shavuot*. But *Sukkot*, the third major pilgrimage feast, seems to have disappeared from the church. Yet that is precisely the feast where, from the Jewish point of view, the gentile nations come into the picture. *Zechariah 14* is read during *Sukkot* in the synagogue, where it says that the nations will go up from year to year to celebrate the *Feast of Tabernacles* in Jerusalem. A total of 70 bulls were sacrificed in the temple during the Feast (*Numbers 29*). Jewish tradition explains that this was for the 70 nations of the world (*Genesis 10*). So,

Sukkot is (also) a feast for the nations.

After all, Jesus also celebrated the *Feast of Tabernacles* (*John 7*). With *Sukkot*, we see Jesus as the Hidden One (*7:1-13*), the Teacher (*7:14-36*), the Water of Life (*7:37-53*), the Light of the world (*8:12-9:41*) and as the Good Shepherd (*10:1-21*). The names Jesus bears here all refer to Israel's journey through the desert. As Water and as Light, as Shepherd and as Teacher: this is how we see Jesus depicted during the celebration of the *Feast of Tabernacles* in Jerusalem.

The *Book of Revelation* is like a liturgy for the feasts of the autumn, from the *Day of the Trumpet* (*Revelation 1*) to *Sukkot*, where the crowd, that no one can count, stands clothed in white before the Throne with palm branches in their hands (*Revelation 7:9*). Together with Israel (*Revelation 7:1-8*), the saved nations sing the praises of the God of Israel. We learn that with the Feast of Tabernacles. Are we ready for this in the church yet?

In Memoriam



Rev Jaap de Vreugd

On 6 August 2024, Rev Jaap de Vreugd passed away. In the morning, I had read *Psalms 121* together with his wife Dicky and children and grandchildren at his bedside, and we prayed for him. *Verse 8* (KJV) particularly impressed us:

"The Lord will watch over your going out [from this life] and your coming in [into the everlasting life of the age to come] from this time forth, and even forever more."

In the afternoon he passed away, a great loss for all of us. First and foremost for his wife, children and

grandchildren, who will truly miss him.

Also for all in the worldwide family of Christians for Israel. With great wisdom and thoughtfulness, he led the work of Christians for Israel in the Netherlands with determination as chairman of the Dutch Board. Having resigned from that role he then served as editorial board member of the Dutch monthly newspaper *Israel Aktueel* and of the theological periodical *Israel and the Church*. He gave direction to the development of biblical and theological reflection on Israel and the Jewish people—inspired by a vast reading and knowledge of the literature on Israel and Judaism. His personal contacts with many Jewish friends in the Netherlands and in Israel undoubtedly contributed much to an increasing mutual respect between many believers in Christianity and the Jewish people. He impressed many in Israel when he addressed his Jewish audience in fluent modern Hebrew in his speeches.

Born in 1945 he grew up in Katwijk (a village at the shores of the North Sea)

and studied theology at the University of Utrecht from 1964 to 1969 under a famous Dutch theologian Prof Van Ruler and others. He became a Dutch reformed pastor in Haaften 1970-1975; Bodegraven 1975-1982; Amersfoort 1982-2006. In 1978 he led a trip to Israel for the first time. Dozens more would follow, but that first trip struck like lightning. Especially during the visit at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, where the Lord God awakened in his spirit and his mind a deep understanding that God will remain faithful to Israel forever and that the Jewish people of today are still God's chosen people. Overwhelmed by that understanding he then committed himself for the rest of his life, even more than before, to Israel and the Jewish people.

He became involved in practical works in Israel, first with Nes Ammim, a kind of Christian kibbutz in Israel. Then later he took on leadership roles including becoming president of HGJB, a Dutch Christian young people movement. He was involved in

various official committees of the National Church in order to enhance a better theological and biblical understanding of Israel and the Jewish people (the 'Zicht op Israël-Bezinningscomité'). He served as a member and acting president of the Reformed Council for Church-Israel Relations. From the 1990s he served as a board member and later president of Christians for Israel Netherlands. He was involved in founding our Christians for Israel branch in Germany and C4I International. There followed many speaking engagements for Israel, articles in newspapers and theological publications in the journal *Israel and the Church* (of which he was editorial chairman from the beginning). He also published a book: *The Miracle Of Israel*. He maintained many personal contacts in the Jewish community in the Netherlands and in Israel. May his memory continue to be a great blessing and inspiration to us all.

By Rev Willem JJ Glashouwer, President | Christians for Israel International

Naomi Shemer: A Poet who Loved the Land

■ Krista Gerloff

Author and Theologian

The popular Israeli poet, singer and songwriter Naomi Shemer is currently being commemorated in Israel. She died 20 years ago, but her work lives on, not only in her home country, but also worldwide.

She was born Naomi Sapir on 13 July 1930. She grew up in Kibbutz Kinneret on the shores of the Sea of Galilee— whose eucalyptus groves she sings about with great feeling. Her family history is the history of the Jewish pioneers. They have been planting today's huge eucalyptus trees since 1912 and survived the battles in the War of Independence in Kibbutz Deganja.

Naomi Sapir went to school from Kibbutz Kinneret across the Jordan Bridge to Kibbutz Deganya. At the age of six, she started playing the piano that her mother had received as a gift and which was available to all the children in the kibbutz. Back then, such an instrument was something very special. She later studied at music schools in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem before returning to the kibbutz as a music and rhythm teacher. She wrote her first songs for children. In the army, she served in the cultural department of the 'Nachal' unit. Naomi then married the actor Gideon Shemer and moved to Tel Aviv with him.

For a time, she worked closely with the *Nachal* music band and other military bands. This environment was the fertile ground from which some famous Israeli singers and musicians came. Quite a few of the good old Israeli hits were written there. The sound of modern Israeli pop music makes some people long for those times.

The song '*Hoppa hey*', originally written for the central commando unit, won first prize at an international festival in Italy in 1960. However, her song '*Jerusalem of Gold*', whose title comes from old Jewish legends, is probably the best known. '*Yerushalayim shel zahav*' was heard for the first time at the 1967 Israeli song festival (*Festival haZemer veHaPizmon*) in Jerusalem, but not as one of the songs competing there. '*Yerushalayim shel zahav*'—along with four other songs—had been commissioned by Jerusalem's mayor Teddy Kollek and was intended to bridge the judges' consultation period.

When Naomi Shemer had already decided on this motif, she was overcome with doubt: "One needs to remember how grey and lacking in gold Jerusalem was then, and how one could not speak highly of it or have parades there. Like the saying "*Do not wake or rouse*" [*Song of Songs 2:7*], I was awestruck and asked myself: Of gold? Are you sure about the gold? And something answered me: Absolutely, of gold."

The festival was part of the independence celebrations. Three weeks later, during the Six-Day War, the Old City with the Temple Mount and the Western Wall fell back into Jewish hands. Under this impression, the poet added another verse to her song: "We returned to the water sources and the market, The *shofar* calls again on the Temple Mount in the Old City... And to the Dead Sea we go through Jericho again."

Later she was accused of having copied the melody. Initially, she vehemently defended herself against this accusation. It was only towards the end of her life that she wrote to her friend Gil Aldama that she had once been sung a Basque folk song. She had forgotten that. But somehow, the melody had subconsciously got stuck in her head. She later remembered this.

Obviously, this accusation has caused Naomi Shemer a

lot of thought—although it is rather natural and happens again and again that musicians are influenced and inspired by other melodies.

The Festival of Hebrew Songs, which at the time was all about originality, was first held in 1960 at the Tel Aviv Cultural Center and broadcast on Kol Israel radio and later on television. This festival existed for twenty years before it was discontinued due to Eurovision, on which Israeli singers were increasingly focusing. The originality of Hebrew songs remained for some time and was rewarded with prizes in Eurovision.

The Ein Gev festival has a much longer tradition. Kibbutz members had no opportunity to travel to the city or invite artists. Therefore, in April 1943, they began to organise a festival on-site with their own funds, at which classical music and Israeli songs were performed. Naomi Shemer presented her song '*Hakol patuah*' at this festival in 1993: "Anything is possible as long as we sing here like this." In 2002, the entire Ein Gev Festival was dedicated to her songs. The programme was hosted by her friend Ehud Manor, also a genius of Israeli-Hebrew song.

Naomi Shemer wrote songs for a wide variety of performers who made her work known worldwide— such as Shuli Natan, whose voice has been inextricably linked to the song '*Yerushalaim shel zahav*' from the very beginning. In 2002, she sang it again in Ein Gev.

But Naomi also sang herself time and again and was received with much love by very different audiences, whether children or adults. She has participated several times in events at the art school in Tel Aviv. She wrote the song '*Shanah Tova*' for the Jewish New Year, *Rosh HaShanah*: "Whether the year will be good, whether we forget disappointment, ultimately depends on us..."

In Naomi Shemer's songs, one repeatedly discovers biblical motifs, for example in the above-mentioned song about Jerusalem: "If I forget you, Jerusalem..." (*Psalms 137:5*). The Hebrew invitation '*Hallelu Yah!*'—"Praise the Lord!"—is a natural part of many of their songs.

The threat and military service of young Israelis are part of everyday life in Israel and are also expressed in some songs, be it the cheerful '*My soldier has come back*' or the sad '*We are both from the same village*', a song dedicated to a fallen friend that is still performed today on memorial days for fallen soldiers.

Naomi Shemer wrote many of her own lyrics and melodies but was also able to translate lyrics from other languages wonderfully. She translated some French chansons from her time in Paris into Hebrew, especially for the Israeli actor and singer Yossi Bannay, who also began his career in the Nachal military band.

At the request of singer Chava Alberstein, she was asked to write Hebrew lyrics for the Beatles song '*Let It Be*'. This was at the time of the difficult *Yom Kippur War*, and Naomi was keen to write something encouraging. She opted for the title '*Lu yehi*', which means "Let it be!" but rather still: "Let it become!" which is expressed in the refrain: "All that we ask, may it be done!" When Mordechai Horowitz, her second husband, heard this text, he thought it was too good for a Beatles melody and asked his wife to write her own melody. The result was '*Lu yehi*', a completely new song.

Shemer translated the poem '*Oh Captain, my Captain*'



Naomi Shemer in Jerusalem in 1967. | Photo: Boris Carmi/Meitar Collection/National Library of Israel/The Pritzker Family National Photography Collection/CC BY 4.0

by Walt Withman, which he had written after the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, into Hebrew and dedicated it to the assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, although she did not share his political views. Meital Trabelski gave the song its very dramatic expression.

Naomi Shemer saw herself as a songwriter who writes for everyone. And that's exactly what she was. As the daughter of Jewish settlers who came to the land of Israel before the state was established, she was a convinced Zionist and loved the country. That is why she was also against any cession of territory and the evacuation of Israeli settlements on the Sinai Peninsula. For her, there was no difference between the Jewish settlement of Sinai, Judea and Samaria or the area around the Sea of Galilee. This made her political, whether she wanted to be or not. Her song '*Al kol ele*', which she wrote after the death of her brother-in-law and in which she asks for God's protection, became a protest song against the evacuation of Sinai, especially because of a statement in the second verse: "Please don't uproot what has been planted! Don't forget the hope! Bring us back, and we will return to the good land..."

In 1987, her life's work was honoured with the Israel Prize. Then, it became known that Naomi Shemer had cancer. Fellow friends organised a farewell concert in 1991. Shemer's melancholy song was performed there: "It's sad to die in *Tammuz*... when the peaches are ripe..." *Tammuz* is a summer month in the Hebrew calendar. Naomi said afterwards that her friends had not managed to see her off. Despite her illness, she actually lived for another 13 years before dying on 26 June 2004, the 7th of *Tammuz* 5764. She was buried in the cemetery of Kibbutz Kinneret on the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

More than ten years ago, a new series of Israeli banknotes was developed depicting "portraits of outstanding Hebrew poets whose life stories, works, and activities are intertwined with the story of the rebirth of the Nation of Israel in its land." The image of Naomi Shemer was seriously considered but ultimately rejected.

Her love for the land of Israel and her connection with the lives of ordinary people appealed to many and still does today. Her lyrics express what Israelis call '*Israeliut*': their mentality, their thoughts and feelings, their innermost being.

Footnotes:

¹<http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/shemer-naomi> (27.05.2013)

²<https://boi.org.il/en/economic-roles/banknotes-and-coins/> (16.07.2024)

Pride Before a Fall

Tal Hartuv

Israeli Tour Guide | Author | Cartoonist

As with any war, in Israel's war against our enemies, there are events which are game-changers, for good and for bad. 27 July 2024 was one game-changer.

Shabbat was not quite over when an Iranian missile sent by Hezbollah struck children playing on a football field in Majdal Shams, a Druze town on Israel's northern border. With utter horror, the nation of Israel watched as the emergency services were called in, and throughout the night, Israelis worked to gather the pieces of little people for their unthinkable burial.

That night was a reminder to Jewish Israelis that not only are the Druze a significant minority in Israel, many of whom serve in the forces, but that they are also exposed to the same savagery as anyone else. We are all Druze since then, not just in words. Israelis bought Druze flags and rushed to the Druze town to join the funeral processions. Coined now as the Madjal Shams Massacre—with even its own Wikipedia page—the murder of these children will remain, even after the war, as one of the most shocking events since the massacre of 7 October.

On 30 July at night, there was another game-changer when Israel executed justice by sending a rocket deep into the heart of a Lebanese city, taking out Fuad Shukr, a senior commander of Hezbollah who was responsible for the murder of the Druze children. They knew it was coming, as did we, but no one, not one Israeli, in their wildest dreams, foresaw that just six hours later, Ismail Haniyeh would be eliminated by a rocket launched from inside Teheran.

Haniyeh, who was filmed bowing to his inferior god in gratitude while watching footage of Israelis being murdered, was abhorrently coined as 'a moderate' and a



A delegation of Jewish mothers living in the Golan Heights at the Druze village of Majdal Shams, to comfort the mourning parents of the twelve children who were killed by a Hezbollah missile attack. | Photo: Michael Giladi/Flash90

'negotiator' by much of the Western politicians and media.

Social media was flooded with short clips of Israeli vendors dishing out free watermelon and candies to any passers-by. That day there were also extraordinary numbers of rabbis interviewed, a rare occurrence, on Israeli media. Their message was universal: Israel is expected to do justice, and that means reducing evil in the world. When we are successful at that, we should rejoice and thank our God that we were able to carry out His commission to us and do exactly that.

For Iran, it is a Different Story

Israel is fortunate to have an Iranian Jewish community, fluent in Persian and Iranian culture. Many were called upon that day to offer their insights, which probably slipped by those of us who are not Persian. Hospitality is everything in the Middle East, and it is one of the main commandments of Judaism, too. Just as

in Judaism, in the Muslim world, when you host a guest in your house, even if you don't like them, it is paramount that you feed them, protect them, and never ask them to leave. Failure to protect and feed them is considered a disgrace.

Our Iranian-Israeli commentators informed their audiences that we should all imagine that this ethos of protective hospitality is even more important in Iran than in Israel. Greater the failure then greater the shame. Greater the

shame, then greater the rage.

At the time of writing, Israel is waiting for the raging response that Iran has avowed, born from their shame. It seems inevitable, and there is an edginess in the air. But no matter how tense it is here, when Iran does attack, unlike our enemies, we can hold our heads up high because as long as we continue to do the right thing, our pride will never be damaged, and unlike the Iranians, we will continue to hold our heads up high.



The young victims of Majdal Shams. | Photo: Michael Giladi/Flash90

Six Murdered Hostages Found in Gaza



The faces of the six murdered hostages found in Gaza. | Photo: Doron Horowitz/Flash90

The news that the six hostages were brutally murdered just hours before Israeli forces got to them, sent Israel into shock early September.

Not since 7 October, has such collective anguish been felt. Alex Lubnov, Carmel Gat, Hersh

Goldberg-Polin, Eden Yerushalmi, Ori Danino, and Almog Sarusi were found in a tunnel 20 metres underground. Only Carmel Gat had lived to see 40, the others were in their twenties, save for 32-year old Alex Lubnov.

Dream Becomes Reality for Adel



Left: Adel and her mother Chaya, right before departure. | Middle: The students are ready for departure! | Right: Emotional moments as parents say goodbye to their children. | Photos: C4I Ukraine

■ Koen Carlier Aliyah Fieldworker Ukraine

After months of preparation, Tuesday 3 September had finally arrived! Seventeen 14-year-olds were about to embark on their journey to Israel, where they will spend the next four years studying as part of the Na'ale programme.

We first brought the young people to our shelter in western Ukraine, where we checked their documents and gave them final instructions. They came from various cities in Ukraine, including Zaporizhzhia, Dnipro and Kiev. Two young people from Odessa went directly to Kishenov, the capital of Moldova from where their flight to Israel would depart.

It was an exciting but also frightening experience for the youngsters. The air raid sirens echoed across the country as dozens of rockets and drones were launched, causing widespread destruction in many cities, leading to numerous deaths and hundreds of wounded. This devastating war has been raging for over two and a half years now, with no end in sight.

Promoting Aliyah

Why are these young people leaving for Israel at such a

young age? Every year, the Jewish Agency allows hundreds of Jewish teenagers the opportunity to take tests and exams, and those who pass can study in Israel for four years at no cost—provided their parents give their consent.

An Emotional Moment

We had a heartfelt conversation with Chaya and her 14-year-old daughter Adel. Years ago, we had met Chaya at the Jewish school in Mariupol. Today we wished her 'mazel tov' as her eldest child prepared to leave for Israel with the Na'ale programme. Chaya said nothing, but a proud smile crossed her face. For parents, saying goodbye to their children is always emotional, especially amid the ongoing wars in both Ukraine and Israel. 'What if...?' they must wonder. Is this the last time I will see my son or daughter? The children likely share similar fears. Will I see my parents or grandparents again? As drivers and guides, we play an important role in these moments, offering friendly words and a helpful hand that can make all the difference.

Seizing the Opportunity

After leaving our shelter, a 330-kilometre journey in our large coach lies ahead of us, and of course the

border crossing between Ukraine and Moldova, which this time took four hours. Along the way, we spoke with many of the young people. Why had they chosen to go to Israel now? Weren't they afraid? Most were determined in their decision to seize this opportunity with both hands, eager to live and study in Israel.

This was also the case for Adel. Her mother had prepared her for this moment from an early age, emphasising the importance of returning to Israel since the Bible speaks so clearly about returning to Israel. "You will be the first of our four children to go to Israel, and your brothers will follow." For Adel, this departure was a dream come true—going to the land of her ancestors.

A New Future

At Kishenov airport, we were greeted by a representative from the Jewish Agency, who expressed gratitude to Christians for Israel for taking such good care of the young people over the past few days. Shortly after midnight, the flight departed with the seventeen young people, heading for a new future in Israel. The 'children' of Israel are coming home, helped by the nations, as foretold by the prophets of Israel.

Will You Help Us Bring Jewish People to Israel?

For many years, we have supported Jewish people making *Aliyah* to Israel, no matter the circumstances. Our work continues thanks to the prayers and generous financial contributions of people like you.

Ukraine

We assist people in securing the necessary documents and provide transportation to the airport in Moldova. Cost: €135 p.p.

India

We help Bnei Menashe (tribe of Menashe) with flight tickets to Israel. Cost: €900 p.p.

Ethiopia

We sponsor flights and support their integration Israel. Cost: €2000 p.p.

Other Regions

We also facilitate *Aliyah* from parts of the world where, due to safety concerns, we are not able to share specific details.

First Home in the Homeland

Christians for Israel assists new immigrants (in Hebrew: *olim*) to integrate into Israeli society through the 'First Home in the Homeland' project. Young families are provided with a warm home on a *kibbutz* for their first six or twelve months in Israel while following an intensive Hebrew course.



This map shows the situation in Ukraine and how we bring *olim* to Moldova from where they fly to Israel.



No One Will be Left Behind in Exile!

■ Koen Carlier Aliyah Fieldworker Ukraine

At the beginning of the war in Ukraine, over two and a half years ago, Faina Schnaiderman from the Vinnitsa region called her granddaughter Diana in Israel. Faina longed to join her in Israel, but felt hopeless due to a broken hip that doctors said couldn't be treated. She was desperate.

Diana advised her grandmother to contact the team of Christians for Israel in Ukraine, and she did. With a trembling voice, Faina asked if we remembered her—the elderly Jewish lady who hadn't planned on making the move to Israel. Of course, we recognised her sweet voice!

On 22 March 2022, we helped bring Faina, to the Ukraine-Moldova border alongside dozens of other Jewish refugees. Unable to walk due to her hip injury, Faina was placed on a stretcher. She was in good company as she was carried across the bridge over the Dniester River, which separates Moldova from Ukraine by brothers Roger and Frank van Oordt, Chief Rabbi Binyomin Jacobs from the Netherlands and myself. A distance of almost one kilometre. The journey continued to Kishenov by bus, where the group then flew to Israel. In Kishenov's shelter, we sang a Hebrew song together, led by the Chief Rabbi. Later, I met Faina in Israel, where she was recovering from successful hip surgery, with doctors optimistic about her full recovery.

At the time, Faina's daughter Liliya, granddaughter and great-grandson Nikita were still living in a village in eastern Ukraine. Faina's greatest wish was for them to join her in Israel. Not long after, we were able to bring them to the border with Moldova. However, complications with their travel documents delayed their departure. Months passed quietly until we received the heartbreaking news that Faina's granddaughter, Nikita's mother, had suddenly passed away. Nikita's grandmother, Liliya, became his legal guardian. Despite the bureaucratic challenges, their documents were finally in order, and their departure went smoothly at the border.

Later on, we received a photo from Israel that captured the emotional reunion of Faina with her daughter Liliya and great-grandson Nikita. It was a powerful reminder of the Lord's promise that no one will be left behind in exile and that the Jewish people will return weeping. We witnessed this when Faina left Ukraine for good, and again more recently when her family followed. Even as war continues in Ukraine and Israel, the return of the Jewish people from the four corners of the world to Israel, that tiny nation, continues!

"Then they will know that I am the Lord their God, for though I sent them into exile among the nations, I will gather them to their own land, not leaving any behind. I will no longer hide My face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel, declares the Sovereign Lord." Ezekiel 39:28-29



Top left: Ira Carlier, Nikita and Liliya. Top right: Faina Schnaiderman. Bottom: Faina is carried across the Ukraine-Moldava border on a stretcher. | Photos: C4I Ukraine

It costs €135 to help one person make Aliyah from Ukraine. **Will you help? Every amount helps!**

YES! I Want to Support Christians for Israel

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- My donation for ministry costs, print & post
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ALIYAH - BRING THE JEWS HOME

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

SOCIAL WELFARE PROJECTS

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

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TEACHING RESOURCES

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