

dispatch from Jerusalem

A Publication of Bridges for Peace

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UNITY IN TIME OF TROUBLE

Israel's Hidden Strength

BRIDGES FOR PEACE

Christians supporting Israel and building relationships between Christians and Jews in Israel and around the world.

It is our desire to see Christians and Jews working side by side for better understanding and a more secure Israel. Bridges for Peace seeks to be a ministry of hope and reconciliation. Through programs both in Israel and worldwide, we are giving Christians the opportunity to actively express their biblical responsibility before God to be faithful to Israel and the Jewish community. For too long Christians have been silent. For too long the Jewish community has had to fight its battles alone. It is time Christian individuals and congregations speak up for the people who gave us the Bible.

We are committed to the following goals:

To encourage meaningful and supportive relationships between Christians and Jews in Israel and around the world.

To educate and equip Christians to identify with Israel, the Jewish people and the biblical/Hebraic foundations of our faith.

To bless Israel and the Jewish people in Israel and worldwide through practical assistance, volunteer service and prayer.

To communicate Christian perspectives to the attention of Israeli leaders and the Jewish community-at-large.

To counter anti-Semitism worldwide and support Israel's divine God-given right to exist in her God-given land.

Dispatch from Jerusalem

The *Dispatch from Jerusalem* is Bridges for Peace's signature publication presenting positive news and perspectives from Israel to encourage understanding and support for the Jewish people and the Land of Israel.

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Join us in practical expressions to bless Israel by becoming an active bridge-builder and participating in fulfilling biblical prophecy through the following educational and humanitarian programs of Bridges for Peace.

Publications: The bimonthly *Dispatch from Jerusalem*, the monthly in-depth study of the Israel Teaching Letter and the weekly e-mailed Israel Current News Update with Prayer Focus. To subscribe, sign up on the front page of our website at www.bridgesforpeace.com

Chai (Life) Night Prayer and Study Groups: A monthly intercessory prayer program for groups desiring to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem" (Ps. 122:6).

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Discovery Groups: Groups have the opportunity to serve with us for a period of one to four days.

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Project Rescue/Project Tikvah (Hope): These programs help the poorest Jews in the countries of the Diaspora.

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For more information, contact any of our national offices. We are also available to help you plan activities in your area. When you come to Israel, we would like to meet you or speak to your group. Please contact us in advance to visit our International Headquarters and Outreach Center in Jerusalem.

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Isaiah 40:1, "Comfort, yes, comfort My people," resound in my heart as many Israeli families mourn. These words have become my daily prayer. It is also one of the motivations of our team of Bridges for Peace volunteers in Israel.

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BFP in Action

The Long Road Home

BRIDGES FOR PEACE LEADERS walked among the charred remains that were once homes. We surveyed the pitted scars left by bullets tearing through doors, piles of rubble and debris scattered by explosions. We gazed into blackened bedrooms, the smell of burnt flesh lingering in our nostrils.

Entire blocks of Kfar Aza had been completely destroyed when Hamas terrorists launched their barbaric attack on October 7. Now, weeks after that heinous morning, the rubble still bears the evidence of homeowners who had been murdered, kidnapped or fled for their lives.

Kfar Aza is only one community among many. Kibbutz Be'eri, Netivot, Ofakim, Sderot, Nahal Oz, Nir Oz, Re'im and many more are reeling from trauma and destruction. Communities and lives changed forever. Moreover, as the survivors come face-to-face with the scattered remains of what used to be refuges for their families, their hearts are heavy with the yearning for home.

In the wake of October 7, some 500,000 Israelis from the Gaza border communities as well as towns and villages on the Lebanon border were displaced as they fled their homes or were evacuated by the army. Israel experienced a refugee crisis of massive proportion. Hundreds of thousands of Israelis were settled in temporary housing or hotels in safer areas like Mitzpe Ramon, Beit Shemesh or Jerusalem.

Bridges for Peace visited these places of refuge. We comforted the survivors who had lost everything, brought aid to over 200 families in desperate need and delivered home appliances in partnership with the Isaiah Projects to the residents of Kibbutz Be'eri. Our hearts were heavy as we contemplated their future. October 7 left roads destroyed, communities burned and infrastructure and utilities devastated and disrupted. Add to that the uncertainty of unemployment by the thousands and the haunting memory of genocide wherever they turn.

Despite the ongoing war against Hamas in Gaza and the nearly 180,000 Israelis who remain displaced, Israel is committed to the gigantic task of resettling the south, repairing what was destroyed and damaged as well as securing these communities to prevent another October 7 from ever happening again. But this task is enormous and time consuming. It also promises to be emotionally draining for the terrorized residents who desire to return home.

Speaking with a resident from Kfar Aza, Sarit (name change to protect privacy) told us that she is terrified to return home and sleep in her bed. "It's a place of death," she admitted. Asked what she might do, she said, "I might be able to live in my father's home, but it has to be completely restored because of damage." As we spoke, a tearful Sarit confessed that her immediate future is filled with intense counselling and inner healing as she tries to come to grips with the fact that many of her closet friends and neighbors had been brutally murdered.

“

We comforted the survivors who had lost everything, brought aid to over 200 families in desperate need and delivered home appliances in partnership with the Isaiah Projects to the residents of Kibbutz Be'eri.

”

For decades, Bridges for Peace has worked in many of the communities that Hamas attacked. We have built relationships with mayors, community leaders, social workers, teachers, children and parents. These are people who love their communities and have dedicated their lives to partnering with us to provide for the needy, help with infrastructure like bomb shelters or assist children from impoverished families succeed in school. Since forces of evil flooded down their streets, mowing down people out for a morning walk or watering their garden and bursting into bedrooms and safe rooms to slaughter and kidnap, these survivors need us more than ever.

The southern communities will be resettled. As I write this letter, the residents from six communities have started to return. But for the communities that were hardest hit, the reality is that it will be up to one to two years before they can start going back. Temporary accommodation featuring mobile homes and caravans are being set up. Hotels are still bursting at the seams with displaced Israeli families. Grief and pain linger like an ever present shadow.

Bridges for Peace remains committed to and intimately involved in demonstrating love and tangible support for the survivors. The requests of desperate needs continue to flow in. The testimonies are heart wrenching. As soldiers continue to fall in battle, increasingly more families are thrust into mourning. Through it all, we remain on the frontlines. Bridges for Peace mourns with the families who feel like parts of their souls have perished with the death of a son or husband. We attend funerals and listen to the intense sobbing that



In partnership with the Isaiah Project, we delivered refrigerators to survivors from Kibbutz Be'eri.

reverberates from those grieving around the open grave. We sit with distraught families who eagerly await—with hope and prayer—for the return of a kidnapped loved one. We embrace the survivors who stand in disbelief at our assistance and deeply moved by our love. Every day, we witness the love of God pouring into these peoples' lives thanks to the care and commitment of Christians around the world. We see the disbelief on their faces when they realize they are not alone, that there are people who love them, see them, hear them and stand with them.

Please help us bring the light of God into the lives of Israelis who are beginning to walk the long road home as they try to rebuild their shattered lives. Let's do our part in rebuilding the south, both in the hearts, families and homes of these Israelis. Let's make sure that they never feel alone. Please consider a donation to our Crisis Assistance Fund so that we can help the south return to life with the support of Christians who reflect the love of God. Will you stand with the Israelis of the south today?



With utmost urgency,
Rev. Peter Fast,
International CEO



REVENGE, RETALIATION OR A FIGHT AGAINST EVIL?

“OVER THE TOP.” Taking to the White House podium early February, that’s how US President Joe Biden chose to describe Israel’s military campaign against Hamas in Gaza.

The three-word phrase communicated a number of inaccuracies. To pick just one, the average civilian-to-combatant death ratio in conflicts since World War II is 4.5:1, which translates to a staggering four and a half innocent noncombatants killed for every soldier. Israel, however, has achieved an unprecedented 2:1 or less ratio in the Gaza conflict. While all civilian casualties are a tragedy, this figure stands as proof that Israel goes above and beyond to protect Gazans, which means that world leaders should commend the Israel Defense Forces’ capabilities instead of throwing around phrases like “over the top.”

Yet the biggest concern with Biden’s choice of words is neither the insinuating accusations nor the not-so-subtle charges but the fact that the entire premise of his situational assessment is flawed.

“Over the top” implies that Israel’s objective in Gaza is retaliation. It acknowledges that October 7 was horrendous. Of course it does! It also concedes that Israel has every right to respond to the heinous attack—as every sovereign country rightly does.

Yet it also communicates that Israel’s military campaign in Gaza is aimed at paying Hamas back in kind, and that when Israel has deemed the score settled and believes Hamas to have learned its lesson, Jerusalem will halt and life will return to normal. Moreover, “over the top” insinuates that Biden is of the opinion that Hamas’s wrist has now been slapped hard enough and that the Jewish state’s thirst for revenge should have been quenched by now. After all, 1,200 people murdered is atrocious, but surely 28,000 Gazans reportedly killed is sufficient payback?

Yet the Israel–Hamas conflict goes well beyond retaliation. In fact, vindication doesn’t even factor into the equation, argues Col. (ret.) Grisha Yakubovich. “This is an existential war,” explains the last Israeli mayor of Gaza City and the former head of the Civilian Department of COGAT, the unit responsible for implementing Israel’s civilian policy and security coordination in the Gaza Strip and Judea and Samaria. “It’s about confronting global *jihad* and an evil that threatens not only Israel and Jewish values, but the Western world, democracy and freedom as a whole.”

Evolution of Evil

In 1979, Palestinian sheikh Abdullah Yusuf Azzam bid farewell to his native village near Jenin and moved to Pakistan in a bid to help the Afghani *mujahideen* (holy warriors) fight the Soviet invaders. It was there, in the markets of Peshawar, that Azzam bumped into a bright young student by the name of Osama bin Laden, whom he took under his wing and nurtured in the “holy way of *jihad*.”

Azzam was killed in a car bombing in 1989, but when the planes crashed into the Twin Towers 12 years later, his fingerprints were so clearly visible on Bin Laden’s terror coup that the Palestinian sheikh from a village near Jenin was dubbed the father of 9/11, Al Qaeda and modern *jihad*.

In the aftermath of 9/11, Al Qaeda stood as the essence of extremism, the incarnation of evil, Yakubovich explains, yet radicalism has a way of breeding more radicalism until something even more malevolent is born.



Left: The aftermath of the September 11 attacks in 2001 **Top:** ISIS in Sinai **Bottom:** Yahya Sinwar

What hatched in the wake of Bin Laden was a movement of fanatics that looked on their Al Qaeda brethren with contempt, viewing them as heretics and weaklings, Yakubovich continues. “With their black flag, orange jumpsuits and public beheadings, ISIS transformed *jihadism* into something unheard of,” he holds. “The kingdom of ISIS—inspired by the radicalism of the Palestinian sheikh from a village near Jenin—flourished in the plains of Iraq and Syria, and finally reached the Sinai desert, where fanatics and extremists swore allegiance to the black flag.”

Under Muslim Brotherhood-linked Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi, ISIS rampaged through Sinai largely unchecked—and attracted every fanatic and extremist in the region to join their ranks. It was there, in the markets of El Arish and Port Said, that the ISIS holy warriors bumped into young Gazans who had left the coastal enclave because Hamas was simply not hard-core enough for them. ISIS took these Gazans—including the nephew of Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar—under their wing and nurtured them in the “holy way of *jiḥād*.”

Yet radicalism has a way of breeding more radicalism until something even more malevolent is born, Yakubovich explains. And when Morsi fell and his successor, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, launched a large-scale campaign to rid Sinai of insurgence, the young Gazans returned to Gaza, carrying evil with them. It was there, in the markets of Rafah, Gaza City and Jabalia, that they bumped into Hamas, took the terror organization under their wing and nurtured them in the “holy way of *jiḥād*.” This evil had started with the Palestinian sheikh

from a village near Jenin, transformed into the evil of Al Qaeda, morphed into something more radical still in ISIS and then came to roost in Gaza as a new level of fanatic obsession with a singular target in its crosshairs: Israel.

“That’s what we saw on October 7, evidence of a radicalized cruelty that not only kills but rather takes great delight in a systematic pattern of rape, torture and butchery. It wasn’t aspiration for a state but the evolution of evil that started with a Palestinian cleric, circled throughout the Middle East and then came full circle back to the Palestinians on Israel’s doorstep,” Yakubovich explains.

And that’s what makes this war an existential one, he holds. “Forget retaliation and revenge. We are fighting to send a clear message to radicalism breeding all over the Middle East that we will never give up. Evil will never win. We are fighting for us and our people, of course. But the Jewish state serves as the final frontier to Europe and beyond. In the bigger picture, we are defending the Jewish, Christian, Western world and the values you and I hold dear.”



Ilse Strauss,
News Bureau Chief

Israeli Breakthrough Confirms Battle of Gath Mentioned in Book of Kings

A SCIENTIFIC BREAKTHROUGH will now allow for the identification of burnt materials exposed during archaeological excavations and the reconstruction of the temperature at which they were burned.

Researchers from Tel Aviv University, Hebrew University, Bar Ilan University and Ariel University will apply this method to findings from the ancient Philistine city of Tel Tzafit, providing scientific support for the biblical verse: *"Hazeel king of Syria went up and fought against Gath, and took it; then Hazeel set his face to go up to Jerusalem. And Jehoash king of Judah took all the sacred things that his fathers, Jehoshaphat and Jehoram and Ahaziah, kings of Judah, had dedicated, and his own sacred things, and all the gold found in the treasures of the house of the LORD and in the king's house, and sent them to Hazeel king of Syria. Then he went away from Jerusalem,"* (2 Kings 12:17–18).

The researchers explained that, unlike previous methods, the new technique enables the identification of specific materials, such as lime plaster, that underwent combustion even at relatively low temperatures, starting from 200°C [392°F]. This information could have significant implications for interpreting archaeological findings.

Prof. Oded Lipschits from the Institute of Archaeology at Tel Aviv University explained the research. "Throughout the Bronze and Iron Ages, the main construction material in most regions of Israel was mudbrick. This inexpensive and readily available material was used for constructing walls in most structures, sometimes above stone foundations. Therefore, understanding the technology used to produce mudbricks is of great importance."

The new method is based on measuring the magnetic field established in the mudbrick during the burning process.

According to Dr. Yoav Vaknin from the Institute of Archaeology at Tel Aviv University and the Paleomagnetism Laboratory at the Hebrew University, "Within the material from which the mudbrick is made, there are millions of ferromagnetic minerals. That is minerals with magnetic properties, acting like tiny 'compass needles' or small magnets. In dried mudbricks, these magnets are arranged in an almost random manner and largely cancel each other out, making the overall magnetic signal of the mudbrick weak and not very uniform. Heating to a temperature of 200°C [392°F] and above, as in the case of burning, releases the magnetic signals of the particles and gives them freedom of movement.

"Statistically, they then align themselves according to the Earth's magnetic field at that specific location and time. This creates a relatively strong and directionally uniform magnetic field around the mudbrick, measurable using magnetometry, indicating that the mudbrick indeed underwent combustion."

After measuring the magnetic signal recorded in the mudbrick, the researchers gradually "erase" it in a process known as thermal demagnetization. To do this, they heat the mudbrick in a special oven in a dedicated paleomagnetic laboratory that neutralizes the Earth's magnetic field. The heating releases the mineral particles in the mudbrick, and they randomly reorient, canceling each other out, gradually weakening and losing their magnetic direction.

The researchers validated the method in the laboratory. They burned mudbricks under controlled conditions of temperature and magnetic field, and after recording the magnetization, they gradually erased it. They found that the magnetization disappeared entirely at the temperature at which the mudbrick was burned, providing evidence that the method is indeed reliable.

Ynetnews

Evidence of Earliest Coin Use in Israel Unearthed



The excavation site in the Judean Hills



RARE EVIDENCE for the earliest use of coins in the country—an extremely rare silver coin dated to the Persian period (sixth to fifth centuries BC)—was recently discovered in an Israel Antiquities Authority [IAA] excavation at a site in the Judean Hills. The excavation, carried out in the course of infrastructure works, also exposed a building from the First Temple period, with even earlier evidence for commerce in the form of a shekel weight.

The rare coin was discovered by Semyon Gendler, acting Judean district archaeologist of the IAA. The coin, found intentionally broken, was minted with a square stamp embedded into one face. Later, more sophisticated techniques produced coins with protruding rather than sunken stamps.

According to Dr. Robert Kool, head of the IAA Numismatic department, “The coin is extremely rare, joining only half a dozen coins of its type that have been found in archaeological excavations in the country. The coin was minted in a period when the use of coins had just begun. The rare find contributes information concerning the way trade was carried out, and the process whereby global commerce moved from payment by weighing silver pieces to the use of coins. The coin belongs to a group of very early coins that were minted outside Israel in the regions of ancient Greece, Cyprus and Turkey. In the sixth to fifth centuries BC, such coins began to appear at sites in the land of Israel.”

An additional indication of the gradual process is the fact that, although the silver coin was minted as a coin, it was found intentionally cut into two. This indicates that in the fourth century BC, it was used as a weighed piece of silver, rather than as a coin, even though coins were used during this period.

According to Michal Mermelstein and Danny Benayoun, excavation directors on behalf of the IAA, “The site was situated in the rural area of the Kingdom of Judah, whose capital was in Jerusalem. It was first settled in the First Temple period, in the seventh century BC (2,700 years ago), during the reigns of the kings of Judah—Hezekiah, Manasseh, Amon and Josiah—a peak settlement period in the Kingdom of Judah. A characteristic ‘four-room house’ was uncovered from this period, and the shekel weight found on the floor of one of the rooms in the house provides early evidence for trade. The dome-shaped stone weight would have been used for weighing metals, spices and other expensive commodities. The sign on the weight was an ancient Egyptian (hieratic) abbreviation for the word shekel, and the single incised stroke represents one shekel. The weight weighs 11.07grams [0.39 oz.]. This was in effect a standard weight in the region of the Kingdom of Judah, showing that commodities were carefully weighed in the markets.”

According to Eli Escusido, director of the IAA, “It is always surprising how important findings are discovered in unexpected places. The tiny coins are a crucial source of information in archaeology. They provide us visual details, inscriptions and dates. Through a tiny object like a coin, it becomes possible to trace humanity thought processes and observe that our economic habits have remained largely unchanged for thousands of years. Only the technology has changed. In this context, it is interesting to consider future archaeological research in a world that has adopted electronic commerce.”

Israel Antiquities Authority

Hammas:

‘Our Side of the Story’



Operation Al-Aqsa Flood. That is Hamas’s name for the October 7 massacre, the bloodiest day for the Jewish people since the Holocaust. On what is now being called Black Shabbat, thousands of Hamas terrorists stormed into Israel, killing nearly 1,200 people and kidnapping some 240 more. Most of the victims were children, women, babies and the elderly. But Hamas’s media department disputes this account and released a document in January entitled “Our Narrative,” supposedly explaining their side of the October 7 story.

“First: Why Operation Al-Aqsa Flood?”

The diatribe opens with Hamas explaining its version of history that led to the bloody events. It is a summarization of the typical Palestinian revision of history, erasing the ties of the Jewish people to their ancient, biblical homeland.

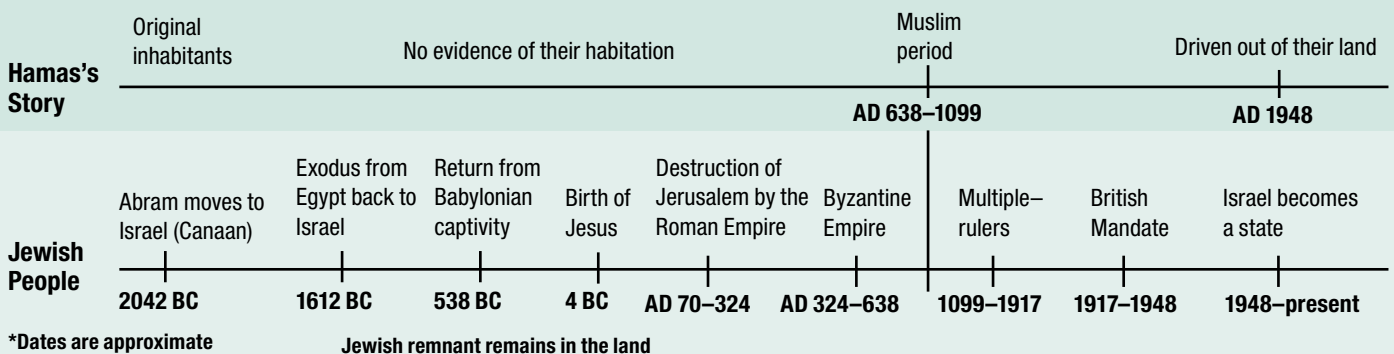
The Hamas version paints a sad picture of Palestinian people as the original inhabitants of the land who were driven out by the evil Zionist regime in 1948. It glosses over the fact that the land was under control of the British since 1917, the Ottomans before that, the Mamluks before that, who came after the

Arabs, the Crusaders and the Romans, spanning back into a history of thousands of years of occupation.

The narrative then paints a picture of violence against the Palestinians at the hands of the evil Zionist occupiers who stole their land, once again glossing over the documented history of Israeli leaders offering compromises and peace negotiations, only to run into the brick wall of Palestinian rejectionism.

“Proceeding from the above, Operation Al-Aqsa Flood on October 7 was a necessary step and a normal response to confront all Israeli conspiracies against the Palestinian people and their cause,” Hamas’s narrative argues. “It was a defensive act in the frame of getting rid of the Israeli occupation, reclaiming the Palestinian rights and on the way for liberation and independence like all peoples around the world did,” the narrative continues.

Bear in mind, this “normal” and “necessary” response was the murder, rape, torture and kidnapping of civilians—not just men, but women, children, babies and grandparents. But then, the murder, torture and rape of women and children never happened, according to Hamas.



“The Events of Operation Al-Aqsa Flood and Response to the Israeli Allegations”

“Operation Al-Aqsa Flood on October 7 targeted the Israeli military sites, and sought to arrest the enemy’s soldiers to pressure the Israeli authorities to release the thousands of Palestinians held in Israeli jails through a prisoners exchange deal.”

Hamas terrorists did target Israeli military sites on October 7. But they also targeted *kibbutzim*, Israeli communities near the Gaza boundary—many without an Israeli soldier in sight. They targeted family homes, a music festival and unsuspecting passersby.

The mention of the “prisoners exchange deal” also glosses over important context. The Palestinian prisoners were in Israeli jails for “serious crimes, such as attempted murder, assault and throwing explosives,” the Israel Prison Service told CNN.

In turn, the Israeli “prisoners” were old women, mothers, young children and a baby boy with fiery red hair whose loved ones celebrated his first birthday in Israel while his fate in Gaza remains unknown. Their crimes? Being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

“Avoiding harm to civilians, especially children, women and elderly people is a religious and moral commitment by all the Al-Qassam Brigades’ fighters,” Hamas’s narrative continued. “We reiterate that...the Palestinian fighters only targeted the occupation soldiers and those who carried weapons against our people.”

Yet the documented evidence—most of it from footage taken by the Hamas terrorists themselves—tells a different story. It shows that Hamas specifically targeted civilians. They shot children hiding under tables and in saferooms. They murdered old men and women in their homes. They dragged screaming mothers and their children into Gaza.

In fact, they were directed to target civilians, according to Hamas terrorists captured during the October 7 massacre and questioned by the Shin Bet, Israel’s internal security organization. The Shin Bet released footage of the interrogations, in which one of the Hamas operatives shared that “whoever kidnaps a hostage and brings them back to Gaza gets a stipend... an apartment and [US \$10,000].”

Hamas’s narrative continues by placing blame for the death of Israeli civilians on the Israeli security forces themselves, and refuting claims that Hamas used civilian sites in Gaza—particularly hospitals—as its base for operations. However, several photos and video footage have surfaced from Gaza contradicting this lie. The footage shows Hamas operatives transporting the Israeli hostages through hospitals in Gaza. Images show rockets and ammunition under the beds of Hamas commanders’ children, in mosques and other civilian sites, turning Gazans into human shields.

“A Reminder to the World, Who Is Hamas?”

Hamas is apparently a “Palestinian Islamic national liberation and resistance movement” whose goal “is to liberate Palestine and confront the Zionist project.” But this wording is somewhat vague.

Hamas’s original charter, released in 1988, highlights the so-called liberation organization’s goal more plainly: “Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it.”

The Hamas narrative also alleges that “the Palestinian people have always stood against oppression, injustice and committing of massacres against civilians regardless of who committed them.” Yet it is Hamas itself who oppresses and exposes its own people to injustice. Under Hamas’s reign of terror, the people of Gaza have suffered under corruption, mismanagement and dismal standards of living at the hands of the terrorist group.

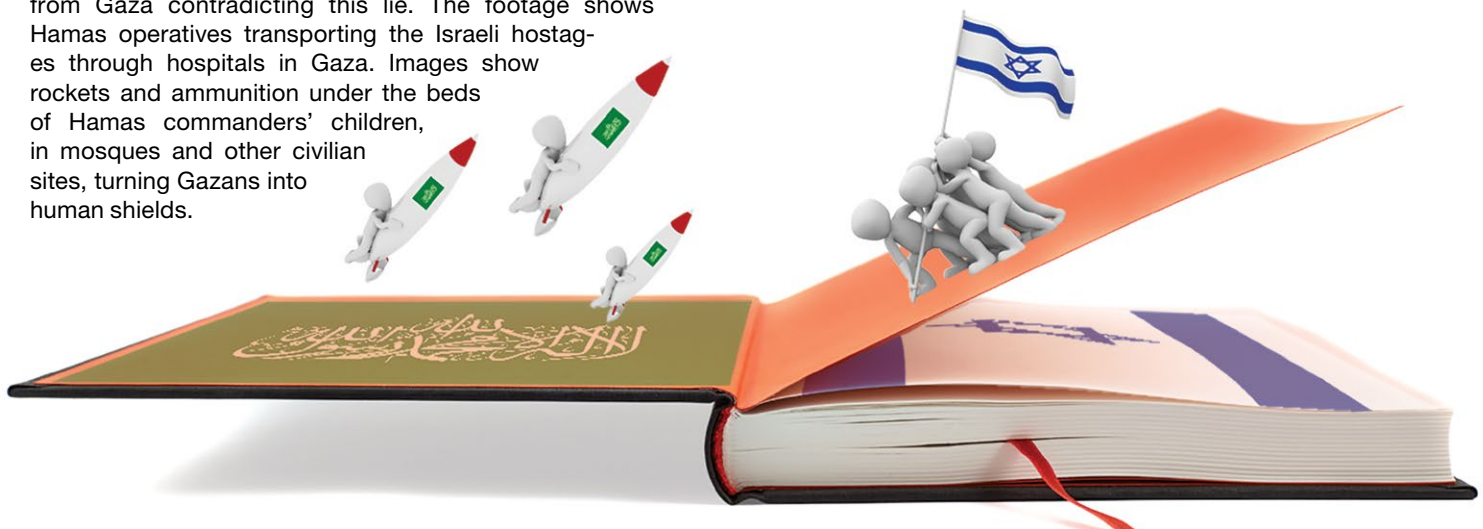
Hamas then brainwashes its people to blame their problems on Israel and urges and bribes them to turn to terrorism, glorifying terrorists as heroic martyrs and financially rewarding convicted terrorists and their families.

The narrative also blamed Israel for “savagely” striking “schools, universities, mosques, churches and hospitals” in Gaza. Israel does indeed strike these sites—because they are where Hamas bases its operations. What the narrative leaves out, however, is that the Israeli military goes to painstaking means to avoid civilian casualties by announcing incoming strikes and warning all civilians to evacuate the area to safety.

Hamas knows that Israel values human life. Hamas, in turn, values blood and “martyrdom.” The proof is in the innocent blood spilt on October 7. There are very often two sides to every story, yet Hamas’s “side of the story” fails to address the need for raping women, kidnapping mothers and babies, and torturing and brutally murdering civilians—because there is no justification for such savage actions.



Kate Norman, BFP Staff Writer





FROM THE RIVER TO THE... WHERE?

PROFESSOR RON HASSNER, Israel studies chair at the University of California, rattled a few academic cages in a recent widely quoted article where he stated, “There’s no shame in being ignorant unless one is screaming for the extermination of millions.”

The comment was both a harsh indictment of an ineffective educational system that has left countless young people vulnerable to historical revisionism and a critical comment on the current reality that lack of foundation has created.

Hassner’s article referenced the ongoing response to the war raging in the Gaza Strip. On October 7, thousands of Hamas terrorists infiltrated Israel and embarked on a killing spree of such savagery that the Western world was left stunned and aghast. As reports of the horrors of that carefully-planned attack hit the news, the global reaction was strongly in support of the actions Israel would take to defend itself. And as Hamas spokesmen proudly broadcasted their intent to carry out similar massacres all over Israel, leaders around the world sent messages of support and condolence to the Israeli government. Many of them made strong public statements in support of Israel’s right and obligation to protect its citizens.

That support, however, would soon be overshadowed by growing unrest on college campuses and in the streets of major cities, as a wave of anti-Israel protests and rallies took

the world by storm. According to an Armed Conflict Location and Event Data project (ACLED) report, in just three short weeks, millions of people had participated in over 4,000 major demonstrations across the globe that were specifically linked to the conflict. Over 90% were pro-Palestinian events, while only the remaining few were supportive of Israel. From south-east Asia and Australia to Europe, Venezuela and South Africa to Japan, the United States and Canada to the United Kingdom, protestors took to the streets waving Palestinian flags, wearing *keffiyehs* and shouting for Israel’s destruction. Nearly half, however, occurred in the Middle East. Fifty-five percent of the pro-Palestinian events took place in Yemen, Turkey, Iran and Morocco.

According to data reported by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, hundreds of thousands flooded Tahrir Square in Baghdad chanting, “No to the occupation! No to Israel! No to America!” A similar sized crowd gathered in Istanbul and later in southern Turkey, where Turkish law enforcement deployed tear gas and water cannons to disperse demonstrators who were attempting to storm a US military base. In Amman, Jordan, thousands of protesters attempted to attack the Israeli Embassy, and clashed with anti-riot police.

In the West, demonstrations in support of Palestinians have occurred with increasing frequency. Tens of thousands gathered in Washington on November 4 for the largest pro-Palestinian rally in US history. And similarly large protests are occurring in New York, London, Toronto and Berlin, all calling for a cease-fire and an end to “Israeli genocide.”

Although some of these demonstrations are peaceful and without incident, others are not. Many have erupted in violence, requiring police intervention, while others have left behind vandalized buildings and piles of trash and broken glass. Protestors have blocked major highways, disrupted emergency services, illegally occupied government buildings, vandalized monuments and intimidated passersby.



This is a global phenomenon involving groups of demonstrators who have precious little in common. They are separated by thousands of miles, speak different languages, share no common history and are on vastly differing ends of the political and religious spectrum. To some, Palestinians represent all oppressed and victimized people everywhere, making every random cause inseparably linked to what is happening in Gaza. Some are looking for a “sexy” cause, a *raison d’être*. And many are simply suffering from FOMO (fear of missing out). But they are united by the movement’s new battle cry: “From the river to the sea.”

The Nile, the Euphrates and the Caribbean

Hassner’s article revealed one startling thing that the protestors seem to have in common regardless of where they are from. That, unfortunately, is ignorance. Several reporters, including a professional survey firm Hassner hired, have joined demonstrations both on and off college campuses to simply ask participants a few very relevant questions. Their answers were alarming.

When asked about the phrase, “From the river to the sea,” the majority of protestors polled strongly agreed with it. However, most thought it referred to an idyllic resolution to the conflict, with Jews and Arabs living happily side by side, each with their own share of the land and with peace finally achieved. Some knew it meant the removal of the Jews from the area, but were shocked to hear it referred to the expulsion or annihilation of 7 million Jews and 2 million Arabs. When pressed to identify which river and which sea, few could correctly do so. Some thought it was the Nile River and the Euphrates Sea. Others suggested the Caribbean and the Dead Sea, or maybe the Atlantic. One college student carrying a sign boldly proclaiming the mantra was pretty sure it was the Black Sea and “that river that’s on the other side of Gaza.”

At a pro-Palestinian event in Canada, protestors were asked about the meaning of genocide. None could give an actual definition, but were convinced that Israel has been “doing genocide on the Palestinians” since 1948 and “what they do

every day is worse than what Hamas did on October 7.” In a recent video, one young woman was terribly distressed and commented that the “genocide is just terrible. They [Palestinian women] can’t even wear wedding dresses.” Very few of the students on any of the campuses polled had any knowledge of the history of the conflict, or the geography and current demographics of the land. Most of them had never seen a map of the region. Moreover, more than 10% of students polled thought Yassir Arafat was the first prime minister of Israel.

All Is Not Lost

There is, however, hope. Most of those doing the polling found that those students who were willing to engage in conversation were surprised to learn the truth and many were profoundly affected. Hassner reports that after learning some basic facts about the Middle East and actually seeing a map, 67% of students who had strongly supported the mantra actually changed their minds and rejected it. “Those who hope to encourage extremism depend on the political ignorance of their audiences,” he said. The remedy, he believes, lies in good teachers, parents and leaders joining the fray and combating bias with education. The truth, he says, is the answer.



Cheryl Hauer,
International Vice President



Aliyah in a Time of War

"Israel is mourning. Israel is fighting. Israel is filled with hope. We are not alone, which is a new feeling, since we were alone for so long."

—Danielle Mor, the Jewish Agency for Israel

Many might assume that immigration to Israel slowed or halted since the October 7 massacre of 1,200 people by Hamas terrorists. With 14,000 rockets raining down from Gaza, Hezbollah posing a grave threat on the northern border and markedly increased violence against Jewish residents in the heartland of Judea and Samaria, most of us would think Israel is too dangerous to visit, much less choose it as a new home. But as Yehuda Cohen, an

Ethiopian Israeli immigrant serving as the Jewish Agency for Israel's emissary to Miami, said at a conference in February, "Even though we are at war, Zion is still home, and it's always better to be home."

I recently had the privilege of representing Bridges for Peace at a strategic gathering of major Christian organizations in the United States aiding in the return of the Jewish people to Zion from the four corners of the earth. This miraculous return that has taken place



"ki" Bring My sons from afar, and My daughters from the ends of the earth." Isaiah 43:5-6



over the past century and a half is called *aliyah*, Hebrew for "going up." It is the ongoing immigration of Jews from over 100 nations as they go "up to Jerusalem" and revive the land of Israel.

A certain question was foremost among the conference participants: With war raging in Israel, are the Jews still coming home? The resounding answer? "Well, yes... of course!"

By the Numbers

This led to the follow-up question: How many are coming home? Some 6,500 new immigrants since October 7, the *Jewish News Syndicate (JNS)* reported in February. That is more than five times the number of precious lives lost in Hamas's attempt at a present-day *Shoah* (Holocaust).

Danielle Mor, head of the Christian Friends of the Jewish Agency and a recognized authority on *aliyah*, provided statistics that help paint the picture of expanding *aliyah* in recent years.

- 2022: Russia 44,000; Ukraine 15,000; North America 4,000; France 2,000
- 2023: Russia 30,000; Ukraine 2,000; North America 2,500; France 1,000
- 2024 (projected): Former Soviet Union 25,000 and 12,000 from the West

To put the most recent numbers in perspective, during the first 10 months of 2023 and throughout three subsequent months of war, 46,687 people from over 37 countries immigrated to Israel.

Mor further reported that *aliyah* applications to the Jewish Agency are up five times their normal amount in France and twice the norm in the US. Immigration from the former Soviet Union, already high since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, is also expected to soar in this season of exploding worldwide anti-Semitism. Even so, many applicants affirm the hope of Zionism over the fear of anti-Semitism as their primary reason for making *aliyah*.

In this Together

Israeli Minister of Aliyah and Integration Ofir Sofer credited the surge of *aliyah* with an "unprecedented feeling of solidarity" with Israel since the October 7 massacre as well as a global spike in anti-Semitism since that dark day. Many of the new immigrants are young people who returned to their ancient homeland to serve in the Israeli military as well as families of soldiers who fell in battle.

"There are those who sought to uproot us from our land," Sofer told *JNS* in February, only to see a homecoming to the land as a result. "At the end of the day, Israel is the national homeland of the Jewish people."

Welcoming them Home

Recognizing this surge of Zionist fervor in the Diaspora (the Jewish population outside Israel), Israeli planners are evaluating the absorption process and infrastructure expansion necessary to accommodate what may easily be a million new immigrants arriving in just the next few years.

Chaim Weizmann established the Jewish Agency in 1929 as a branch of the World Zionist Organization charged with facilitating immigration of Diaspora Jews and their integration with the State of Israel. Ever since 1948, the Jewish Agency has brought over three million *olim* (immigrants to Israel), where it provides transitional housing in absorption centers throughout the country.

To those who are familiar with Bridges for Peace's work, the Jewish Agency's mission sounds strikingly familiar. Our calling at Bridges for Peace is to come alongside the Jewish Agency and other Jewish organizations that are laboring to build up and strengthen Israeli society. At the *aliyah* conference, I was able to report that, thanks to the devoted prayer and generosity of Christians around the world, Bridges for Peace has brought home over 108,000 Jews to date, helped 10,000 annually with household needs, provide ongoing assistance to 5,000 individuals and families, feed 340 school children hot lunches daily, supply 11 tons of food monthly to 23 communities, improve 1,800 homes of the needy and much more.

There is still much work to be done, but Bridges for Peace is positioned to work alongside the Jewish Agency and its partners as a key member of God's *aliyah* team. By His grace, we will accompany the *olim* up to Zion!

Mor came to speak to our conference as a courageous Israeli leader, hurting yet hopeful for her wounded nation. She left us moved in heart and moved to action in the work of *aliyah*.

"*Aliyah* is the most beautiful word in the Hebrew vocabulary," Mor said. "*Aliyah* in a time of war recalls the words of our anthem, *Hatikvah* [the Hope], that now, as always, our hope is not lost."



Bill Adams,
Senior National Representative,
BFP United States



Kate Norman,
BFP Staff Writer

Environment

Robot Harvester Helps Israeli Farmers Move Forward after October 7



BACK IN 2017, Israeli start-up MetoMotion engineered the Greenhouse Robotic Worker (GRoW), a robot greenhouse harvester. Now the invention may just be the answer to the shortage of agricultural workers in the Jewish state in the aftermath of the Hamas massacre on October 7.

The first target market is greenhouse tomatoes, according to MetoMotion.

GRoW is an autonomous robot that uses a 3D vision system to help growers identify the ripeness of crops, harvest them and keep a collection of data to analyze the crops.

The driverless vehicle navigates autonomously between rows of crops with sensors that detect obstacles. Once the vehicle has reached the end of a row, its trailer full of tomatoes is removed and sent to the warehouse, and the vehicle is directed to another row with a smartphone.

GRoW is equipped with dual robotic arms, allowing it to harvest on both sides of the row at the same time. Its 3D vision capabilities allow growers to identify and select the level of ripeness of the produce that they want to harvest. The robotic arms then cut the tomatoes, drop them onto a conveyor belt on the machine and deposit them into boxes.

The 3D vision provides critical analytics information onto a greenhouse dashboard, allowing the grower to analyze crop information and even predict future crop yields.

The system can reduce labor hours by 80%, according to the MetoMotion website, and save growers up to 50% in harvesting costs by replacing agricultural workers with robots.

It can also increase efficiency, producing up to a 15% improvement in crop yield and reduce the spread of infectious crop diseases by 50%.

Michael Amar, the director of agriculture at Kibbutz Alumim, a community in southern Israel near the boundary with Gaza, was looking for a solution to the labor shortage in *kibbutz* (collective community) greenhouses. He discovered MetoMotion and agreed with the company to establish experimental greenhouses at Kibbutz Alumim.

They prepared greenhouses, Amar told *Israel21c*, ordered the seedlings and were preparing to install the first robot when Hamas invaded on October 7.

Amar and his agricultural team defended the *kibbutz* from Hamas terrorists who entered the farms and prevented them from entering the residential area, *Israel21c* reported. Some 20 workers from Thailand were killed in the fighting.

Amar's son, 22-year-old Nitai, a captain in the Israeli military, also fell in battle that day at the Southern Regional Division base.

The MetoMotion team visited Amar and his family to sit *shiva* (seven-day mourning period), when Amar started talking about rebuilding the project and moving forward. Two weeks later, Adi Nir, co-founder and CEO received an invitation to continue the work.

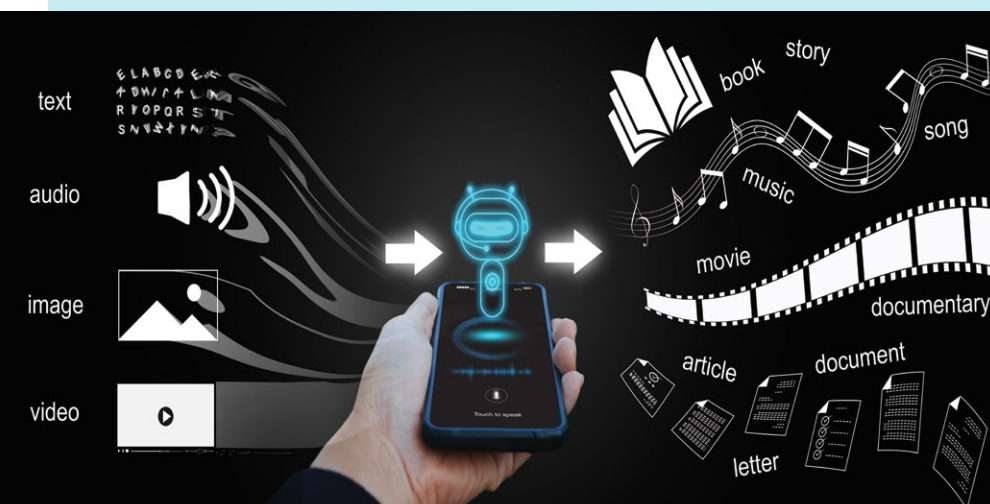
"We were sitting with people who had experienced unbelievable horror on October 7, and all they could talk about was rebuilding and continuing what they started," Nir told *Israel21c*.

"For us, this partnership is much deeper than the usual business deal," *Israel21c* quoted Nir as saying. "It's like a mission for us to help these guys. This is our small way to help and we hope it will come true."

Though the exact path forward is not yet set in stone, Amar told *Israel21c*: "This is Zionism, rebuilding ourselves. We need to pick up our agriculture again and restart the project."

Kate Norman, *Bridges for Peace*





Technology

Google Introduces New Text-to-video AI Model from Israel

RESEARCHERS FROM GOOGLE, Tel Aviv University, the Weizmann Institute and the Technion presented a new text-to-video AI model called Lumiere, which portrays “realistic, diverse and coherent motion.”

Lumiere can create five-second videos with a resolution of 1024x1024 based on prompts, which then animate existing images. It can also create animations in different styles (such as watercolor or sticker) according to a reference image and change the style of the video. Additional features include completing missing parts in the video (inpainting) and expanding its frame (outpainting).

Video creation using AI is a relatively new field, but has gained momentum recently. Tools such as Runway, Pika and

Stable Diffusion already exist on the market. However, the researchers behind Lumiere claim that the existing models are limited in terms of the length of the videos, the quality of the image and the realism of the movement produced.

According to Google and Dr. Tali Dekel from the Weizmann Institute, there are significant challenges in creating videos using AI. “The amount of data is much larger since space and time do not behave in videos like they do in photos. For us to see a very significant breakthrough in the field, there will have to be much deeper work here on how to process information in time, represent movement and edit out the excess information that is in the video. But I’m sure it will happen.”

Yuval Mann, *Ynetnews*



Medicine

Israeli Scientists Introduces Novel Cancer Treatment

A GROUNDBREAKING ISRAELI STUDY introduced a novel approach to cancer treatment through immunotherapy. The research presents a new method that combines different types of immune system cells—specifically T cells and dendritic cells—for more effective cancer treatment.

The study, conducted on mice with aggressive cancers in the breast, lungs and skin, demonstrated a significant reduction in the growth rate of skin and lung cancers with the new treatment compared to the existing one.

However, breast cancer did not respond to the current treatment and also failed to respond to the new approach. Researchers attributed this to the extremely low number of dendritic cells, specialized cells that present antigens throughout the body, alerting T cells to foreign invaders or cancerous transformations. In response, they explored a combined treatment using a new inhibitor they developed, along with the existing treatment, to enhance the activity of dendritic cells in the tumor microenvironment.

The combined treatment proved to be effective, showing that even in cancers resistant to immunotherapy, the synergy between T cells and active dendritic cells induces a robust immune response against tumor growth. Notably, the scientists investigated whether, aside from the strong immune response, the inhibitor could also prevent the cancer from recurring in the future.

The new treatment was effective against the development of secondary tumors after the removal of the primary growth. This suggests the inhibitor successfully generates a systemic immune response throughout the body against cancer, leaving behind memory immune cells that can identify and respond to cancer even after treatment.

This breakthrough offers hope not only for cancer patients requiring immune system activation against tumors but also for individuals with various diseases, such as autoimmune conditions, where patients need targeted immune suppression without the broad and dangerous effects of general immune suppression.

Ron Crissy, *Ynetnews*



What Does Hamas Want?



Hamas's plan—
Israel's destruction



It happened during the height of the battle against ISIS. British author and political commentator Douglas Murray was making small talk at a cocktail party when a fellow guest asked, “What do you think ISIS wants?”

The question left him baffled, Murray admits. Hadn’t the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria been upfront about their objectives? ISIS leaders had proudly taken to the internet sharing their goals. Dozens of papers had been penned and published.

There had even been a monthly online magazine in English proclaiming ISIS’s intent to seize ownership of the entire world, subjugating everyone under its “blessed flag.”

Oh yes, Murray told the guest. ISIS had been crystal clear about what they want: establishing the terror group as a world-wide caliphate ruled by the harshest form of Islamic law. The guest’s brow furrowed. “I don’t really see that,” he pondered.

Murray's anecdote wasn't aimed at exposing an ignorant individual. He sought to highlight an illusion prevalent in much of Western society upon which our enemies prey.

Biblical values have been so deeply interwoven into Western civilization that these principles are often presumed universal. Yet this misconception fails to acknowledge anything that falls outside the framework of a culture governed by freedom, respect and coexistence, and thus attempts to rationalize anomalies like ISIS until it fits the mold.

The result? Instead of facing the chilling truth that evil exists, it's easier to dismiss radical fundamentalism as the fruit of intolerance, the result of a lack of sensitivity and understanding that could easily be remedied with compromise and dialogue.

History on Repeat

Hours after October 7, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told his shaken nation, " Hamas is ISIS."

The parallels of cruelty and savagery between the two terror groups are indeed striking, but go well beyond barbarous acts committed in the name of Islam. Hamas, like ISIS, presented humanity with the proof that evil exists. And once again, instead of facing the chilling truth, it was easier to revert to rationalization in an attempt to fit a genocidal terror group into a framework of a culture governed by freedom, respect and coexistence.

However, while ISIS was viewed as a global issue, Hamas is pigeonholed as an Israel-Palestinian concern. That adds into the mix centuries of anti-Semitism and a role-player that has historically stood as the scapegoat for everything from the plague to poisoning the wells to serving as the cause for their own annihilation. The result? A noxious narrative that turns the victim into the culprit while presenting Hamas as nothing worse than a misunderstood adolescent sullenly slamming doors.

Words into Action

Occupation, suffering, apartheid and land theft. All these have been presented as the reason behind Hamas's gleeful rampage through southern Israel. If only the Gazans were able to come and go as they please...If only Israel were open to peace...If only those Zionists hadn't forced hapless Hamas's hand...If only there were two states for two peoples...October 7 would never have happened and the Middle East would still be the utopia it was before the Jews came.

Yet each of these "root causes" fail to address the elephant in the room. Just like ISIS, Hamas has always been crystal clear about what they want, and it isn't autonomy of movement, democracy, self-governance or a peaceful state alongside their Jewish neighbors. Topping the terror organization's wish list is the annihilation of the Jewish people and replacing the State of Israel with a Muslim nation governed by radical Islamic law.

Hamas's founding document unapologetically highlights Israel's destruction as its *raison d'être*. The manifesto declares that Hamas is opposed to Israel's existence in any form, seeks to replace the Jewish state with a Palestinian one and calls for *jihad* to "raise the banner of Allah over every inch

of Palestine." Then, Hamas borrows from the *Hadith*—the collective body of Muhammad's sayings or traditions—to serve up the slaughter of Jews in an Islamic eschatological context. "The Day of Judgment will not come about until Moslems fight Jews and kill them. Then, the Jews will hide behind rocks and trees, and the rocks and trees will cry out: 'O Moslem, there is a Jew hiding behind me, come and kill him.'"

That puts October 7 in a chilling context. When thousands of Hamas terrorists stormed across the border to slay the Jews—many of them hiding behind rocks and trees—they were merely putting their genocidal law into action and doing what they had always said they would.

From the Horse's Mouth

It isn't Hamas's charter either. There's also leaders like Khaled Mashal proclaiming, "We love death like our enemies love life," Yahya Sinwar adding the question of when Hamas should wipe out Israel as an agenda item to a roundtable discussion with Gazan youth and a spokesperson vowing, "We shall liberate our land with blood, with martyrs, with women, and with children. We shall take down the [border] fence with the fingernails of our children." Let's not forget an interior minister promising, "We will cleanse Palestine of the filth of the Jews. We will establish the caliphate, after the nation has been healed of its cancer—the Jews" and Hamas's cofounder Mahmoud al-Zahar admitting, "When we talk about 'peaceful resistance,' we're deceiving the public."

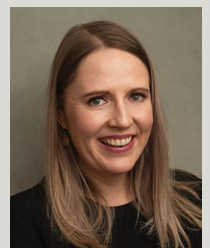
Then, religious leaders link the destruction of Israel with the supreme will of Allah. For Friday sermons, the faithful gather for messages like, "Our doctrine in fighting the Jews is that we will totally exterminate them. We will not leave a single one alive." Imams pray for the ability to "get to the neck of the Jews," and cry out for the "annihilation" and "paralysis" of those whom "[Allah] transformed into filthy, ugly animals like apes and pigs because of the injustice and evil they had brought about."

And as for a two-state solution, Hamas leaders have long since dispelled the myth. "Our plan is to liberate every inch of Palestinian land...Our ultimate plan is [to have] Palestine in its entirety. I say this loud and clear."

True to their Word

"You can accuse Hamas of many things," a friend confided after October 7, "but not of hiding their true colors. They've told us for years what they wanted. The least we could've done was take them seriously."

Israel won't make that mistake twice. As for the rest of the world, the jury is out.



Ilse Strauss,
News Bureau Chief

A Different Kind of

Hostage

The dictionary defines a

hostage as one who has been captured, taken and held as a prisoner of war, kept within bounds of confinement or held under the control of another. On October 7, 2023, over 240 people were torn from their homes, workplaces and even a music event being held to promote peace. They were dragged into the Gaza Strip, beaten, raped, terrified and humiliated. They had gone to sleep the night before, their minds occupied with thoughts of family, friends or perhaps the responsibilities of work, enjoying all the benefits of the freedom that defined their existence. But morning brought a tragic new reality that has now defined their lives for months. They are hostages.

Those who have been released tell the story of that captivity. They speak of terror, abuses of the most horrific kind, near starvation diets and constant psychological manipulation. But unfortunately, they are unable to enjoy their newly regained freedom. Many of them are still experiencing periods of terror, unable to sleep or work. On top of that, they are living with the crippling guilt that comes because they are now “free,” while their friends and family members remain in the prison that is Gaza.

The mental health community in Israel has already begun the daunting task of helping victims deal with overwhelming trauma. And those victims go well beyond the returning hostages. They include those who survived the actual incursions, who saw their friends and loved ones slaughtered while their murderers gleefully rejoiced. Countless homes were ransacked, many burned to the ground. Survivors hid for hours in their safe rooms as they listened to Hamas terrorists eating the family breakfast in the next room. They hid



A bomb shelter in Ashdod covered with pictures of kidnapped civilian.

in bushes, or under the lifeless bodies of friends as they pretended death to stay alive.

And it doesn't end there. Thousands have been wounded and nearly 200,000 evacuated from southern Israel as the war rages, leaving those already victimized even further traumatized. Hundreds of thousands of reservists are in the thick of battle, leaving their families devastated. Nearly 150,000 Holocaust survivors remain in Israel, all of whom are reliving the horrors of the past, their trauma triggered by the terrifying realization that Israel is confronting what many are calling the “new Nazis.” And the families of those remaining in captivity are paralyzed with grief and fear for their loved ones.

A Traumatized Nation

The Merriam-Webster online dictionary adds one more definition to the above list, describing a hostage as one that is involuntarily controlled by an outside influence. Mental health professionals are concerned that this definition describes Israel right now: an entire nation held hostage. Psychiatrists, psychologists and counsellors are faced with providing trauma care to literally the whole country as nearly every Israeli is facing some sort of shock, fear, loss, grief or crippling uncertainty.

Many of those professionals, however, feel ill-equipped to deal with the types of traumata they are encountering. A veteran of a 20-year psychology practice in Israel recently commented that nothing in his education or training could have prepared him for the current situation. No one can predict the long-term effects this will have on the nation. Not all Israelis who are suffering extreme stress right now will develop PTSD, but the statistics say many of them will. Child victims may be facing lifetimes of introversion and social anxiety. Overall, it could mean decades of dealing with drug abuse, alcoholism, domestic violence and rage. And this kind of trauma does not just affect the actual victim. The experiences of those who survived the Holocaust proved that the horrors they suffered could have a profound and crippling effect on their children and even their grandchildren.

**“We
will
never
let the
evil
win.”**

Millennia of God's Faithfulness

There is, however, light at the end of the tunnel. In a recent *Media Line* article, Hebrew University of Jerusalem clinical psychologist Prof. Ruth Pat-Horenczyk suggested an alternative to PTSD. She calls it PTG, or post-traumatic growth. “Although we are in the midst of a traumatic event, although we are exposed to horrible scenes, we are also exposed to heroism,” the professor was quoted as saying.

“People are already showing positive changes. New meaning in life, personal, strength...We are in grief. We are suffering. But we are also growing and able to do things we never thought we were able to do,” she explained.

Such growth is evidenced by the fact that there has been no mass exodus from Israel. Not only are people staying, but others are arriving from Jewish communities all over the world. And in the midst of their pain, Israelis are coming together in unprecedented unity. Thousands are volunteering to help

the most profoundly affected through acts of kindness that range from cleaning out refrigerators in the hardest hit communities to welcoming displaced strangers into their homes, taking sandwiches and treats to soldiers to donating tons of clothing, toys and books to families now living in hotels.

Throughout history, the Jewish people have faced inconceivable challenges, encountering enemies who would at best oppress them and at worst destroy them. They have endured pogroms, the Spanish Inquisition and the Holocaust. Irrational hatred has nipped at their heels no matter their destination. The modern State of Israel has dealt with global anti-Semitism and has been forced into several major wars. The odds have always been against them, and yet they have not only survived, they have thrived.

Many have wondered at the source of such “Jewish resilience.” Natan Sharansky, Soviet dissident and later Israeli politician, human rights activist and author, says it stems from the proof of history. The Passover *sed-er*, he holds, imbues Jews with resilience year upon year. “Once we were slaves,” it proclaims, “but now we are free.”

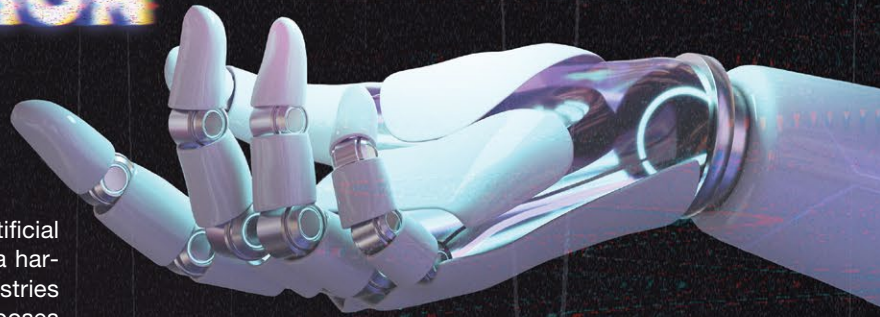
“Once we were there, but now we are here.” That is the ongoing saga of the remarkable ability of the Jewish people to overcome. The God of Israel has promised His people deliverance and victory—and history has proved Him faithful. Even as they are fighting for their survival, His promises remain true. As one of the survivors of the October 7 massacre recently said, “If we give up, the evil wins. We will never let the evil win.”



Cheryl Hauer,
International Vice President

**Hostages being
reunited with
family members**





ARTIFICIAL INDOCTRINATION

IN THE REALM OF TECHNOLOGICAL advancement, Artificial Intelligence (AI) stands as both a beacon of hope and a harbinger of peril. While AI promises to revolutionize industries and streamline processes, its unchecked proliferation poses unprecedented risks. Specifically the field of Generative AI (GenAI) and its ability to obfuscate reality, manipulate narratives and social media algorithms is especially concerning. Whether it is the distortion of historical events or the creation and dissemination of fabricated news stories and images, AI generators are adept at amplifying falsehoods. As a result, the search for truth becomes a casualty.

Fact or Fiction?

A particularly insidious manifestation of GenAI is the proliferation of artificially generated images. Deepfake technology, which leverages AI to create hyper-realistic videos and images, has become increasingly prevalent, blurring the line between fact and fiction. In a conflict as emotionally charged as the Israeli-Palestinian struggle, where imagery plays a pivotal role in shaping perceptions, the rise of AI deepfakes poses a grave threat to the integrity of information. AI-powered tools within graphic design software enable even untrained users to effortlessly manipulate images, adding or removing elements which were not in the original image, or worse, creating hyper-realistic computer generated images with unprecedented ease.

As a result, manipulated visuals depicting purported atrocities or acts of heroism saturate the social media landscape. In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, where information warfare is rampant, AI-generated content published on thousands of fake social media accounts has become a potent tool for spreading misinformation and shaping public opinion.

The October 7 massacre was not only launched in the physical realm but also in cyberspace. As armed Hamas terrorists entered Israeli territory to kidnap, murder and maim,

a simultaneous attack took place on the online battlefield. According to Cyabra, an Israeli social threat intelligence company that exposes bad actors, disinformation and bots online, thousands of fake profiles were activated in the two days following October 7. In a coordinated way, these pro-Palestinian fake profiles launched an online narrative warfare campaign spreading disinformation and propaganda, as well as gathering sensitive details about their targets. Cyabra analyzed 2 million posts, pictures and videos across Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram and TikTok. One out of four or 25% of those social media accounts taking part in the conversation about the war were identified as fake, posting over 312,000 pro-Hamas posts. The bad actors who run these fake profiles also know how to manipulate the social media algorithms. Posts containing pro-Hamas propaganda actually used pro-Israel hashtags, such as #IStandWithIsrael or #Israel in order to gain higher exposure and reach new audiences.

Spotting the Phonies

As we navigate this treacherous terrain of digital deception, it is imperative to equip ourselves with the tools necessary to identify AI-generated images. Here are some key points to consider:

- **Inconsistencies in lighting and shadow:** AI-generated images may exhibit inconsistencies in lighting and shadow that betray their artificial origins.
- **Unnatural facial expressions and appendages:** Deepfake videos and GenAI images often feature unnatural facial expressions, additional appendages such as fingers, hands and movements that diverge from typical human behavior.



vigilance and critical thinking are our greatest allies. AI undoubtedly holds promise for the future, but its unchecked proliferation in the realm of online narrative warfare poses grave risks, particularly in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Pro-Palestinians supporters are not passive observers of the advancements in AI and its applications in online narrative warfare, but seek to use this technology to further delegitimize Israeli actions, incite international condemnation and rally support for their cause. Recognizing the potential of AI-generated content to sway public opinion and shape perceptions, some Palestinian actors have leveraged these technologies to further their own agendas.

As AI algorithms become increasingly adept at generating convincing fake images and videos, the line between reality and fiction becomes ever more blurred, making it difficult to discern truth from propaganda. The proliferation of AI-generated content has been particularly pronounced since the October 7 massacre in the dissemination of fabricated images depicting casualties in Gaza purportedly as a result of Israeli aggression. Palestinians have strategically utilized AI to create and circulate these harrowing images, aiming to elicit global sympathy and condemnation of Israeli actions. These falsified portrayals, often meticulously crafted with AI-driven tools, serve to amplify the narrative of Palestinian victimhood and fuel international outrage against perceived Israeli injustices. This deliberate manipulation of imagery underscores the urgent need for heightened vigilance and critical discernment in navigating the complex landscape of online narrative warfare.

Did You See It?

Dear reader. You may have been under the impression that I wrote this article because my picture and name appear in the byline. It is my obligation to report that some paragraphs are indeed my work, yet others were completely written by AI technology. Can you discern which is which? I have done this intentionally, not to deceive or to trick you, but to highlight the ability and dangers of this technology. In the world we live in today, we need to think twice about everything we read and see. As Christians, we have been warned repeatedly about the risk of deception. As GenAI technology continues to become interwoven into everyday life, we must pray for heightened discernment regarding what we choose to believe, what we choose to share on social media and what we take as fact in the perilous future of this emergent technology.



Nathan Williams,
*Director of Marketing
and Communications*

- **Mismatched audio and visuals:** In some cases, deep-fake videos may feature audio that is out of sync with the corresponding visuals. Be wary of discrepancies between lip movements and spoken words, as these can signal the presence of AI manipulation.
- **Anomalies in background details:** AI-generated images may contain anomalies in background details, such as inconsistencies in perspective or scale.
- **Reverse image search:** Utilize reverse image search tools to verify the authenticity of visual content. By comparing a suspect image to known sources, you can uncover instances of digital manipulation and misinformation.
- **Consult trusted sources:** When in doubt, consult trusted sources and independent experts to corroborate the authenticity of visual content.
- **Use AI to detect AI:** Cyabra has launched an online AI checker. The tool is available at www.botbusters.ai, where users can check if text, images or even social media profiles are fake or AI-generated.

Now What?

In the age of AI, the quest for truth has never been more challenging. As we grapple with the proliferation of AI-generated content and the erosion of trust in online narratives,

‘Comfort My People’

ISAIAH’S FAMOUS WORDS, “*Comfort, yes, comfort My people*” (40:1), resounds in my heart. So many families in Israel are in deep mourning following the massacre on October 7 when Hamas terrorists murdered 1,200 people. Moreover, soldiers are continuing to fall in the ensuing war against Hamas. The words from Isaiah 40:1 has become my daily prayer. It is also one of the motivations of our team of Bridges for Peace volunteers in Israel. On October 7, more Jews were killed than at any other time since the Holocaust. The entire nation is traumatized, and most families have lost someone dear to them.

Blindfolded teddy bears marred with blood stains placed at Dizengoff Square in Tel Aviv represent the 30 children who were kidnapped by Hamas terrorists on October 7.



Funerals

In Israel, burials take place quickly, usually within 24 hours. Judaism entails a belief in the resurrection and forbids embalming and cremation, thus leaving the bodies intact.

Amazingly, the news of a death spreads quickly and people drop everything to be part of the funeral procession. In fact, participation is considered an important *mitzvah* (good deed). Typically, hundreds or in some cases even thousands of people gather. When one of Israel's former chief rabbis died, 700,000 people converged on Jerusalem to accompany him to his burial.

I am always astonished to see how people join the funeral procession for a lone soldier, a Jewish person who moved to Israel without his or her family to serve in the Israel Defense Forces. British-born Netan'el Young died defending Israel far from his country of birth and family. Famous author Daniel Gordis was one of thousands of Israelis who received a What App message asking them to attend Young's burial. It was a simple message, identifying Young as a lone soldier and giving the time and place of the funeral. Although Gordis and his wife didn't know Young, they were two of the hundreds of Israelis who showed up at the funeral of someone they had never met. The fact that they did so during a dangerous time while rockets were being fired on Israeli towns and cities is all the more astonishing. During the funeral, the air raid sirens did indeed sound, and everyone standing around the open grave was forced to fall to the ground for safety. As soon as the all clear came, they proceeded with the funeral.

Jewish funerals are humble and simple. Most Jewish people in Israel are not buried in caskets but in shrouds. The deceased is brought on a board wrapped in a cloth shroud and then lowered by family or friends into the newly dug grave. In death there are no rich or poor. One exception is the death of soldiers, who are buried in simple wood coffins with holes in the bottom. The *Torah* (Gen.–Deut.) teaches, “...*Till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return*” (Gen. 3:19b). This method of burial makes the connection between the person and the dust of the earth.

After prayers and Psalms are said, the family members pick up shovels and fill in the grave. It is their last act of love and mercy for their departed loved one.

After October 7

The massacre of October 7 was so horrific that it was difficult to identify bodies. Family members were asked to bring DNA for their missing loved ones to help in the identification process. Many funerals were delayed by weeks. Some of the missing were later added to the hostage list, and some originally thought to be hostages were eventually proved to have died. The pain and suffering of the nation of Israel is incomprehensible. Israel has changed forever. The Israelis have become a nation in mourning.

Memorial Practices

After the funeral, the family sits *shivah*, a seven-day period of mourning. During this time, they remain at home while



Soldiers grieve for a fallen friend.

friends, family, acquaintances and even perfect strangers will come over, bringing food and sharing fond memories of their loved one. They will sit with the family and try to fulfill the ancient words of the prophet Isaiah, “*Comfort, yes, comfort My people*” (40:1).

On the 30th day, the family will again gather for a memorial time. Then, on the anniversary of the death, the *yartzeit* (a Yiddish word meaning year) is honored by saying the *Kaddish* prayer in the synagogue and lighting a 24-hour memorial candle.

Kaddish is called a mourner's prayer, and is a beautiful affirmation of the goodness of God. “May His great name be blessed, forever and ever. Blessed, praised, glorified, exalted, extolled, honored, elevated and lauded be the Name of the Holy One, blessed is He—above and beyond any blessings and hymns, praises and consolations which are uttered in the world, and say amen.”

Family and friends will then continue to say *Kaddish* for their loved one on every *yartzeit*. October 7 will forever be a day when Israel stops to say *Kaddish*.

Memorial Day in Israel

Struggle always comes before victory. Israel recognizes this every year on *Yom HaZikaron* or Memorial Day. It is commemorated the day before *Yom HaAtzma'ut* or Independence Day. *Yom HaZikaron* is a day of tremendous nationwide sorrow. It conveys the message that Israel owes its independence to soldiers who sacrificed their lives for its existence. On this day, Israel mourns the fallen in the fight for her independence and also those who were killed in terrorist attacks. A two-minute siren sounds twice, once in the evening and again in the morning. People stop in their tracks in silent honor of those who died in service of the country.

On *Yom HaZikaron* in 2023, 24,213 had fallen in defense of Israel, with 4,255 victims of hostile acts. This year, *Yom HaZikaron* will be observed from the evening of May 12 until the following day at sunset. Tragically, this year's number will be much higher. The cemeteries will be full, and in every village,



town and city, people will gather to mourn as a nation. May we live to see the words of the prophet Jeremiah fulfilled, “...*For I will turn their mourning to joy, will comfort them, and make them rejoice rather than sorrow*” (Jer. 31:13).

Rebecca J Brimmer,
International President

Arabs

against Hamas

It is commonly believed that anyone who speaks out in support of Israel's military position is either Jewish or Christian. However, there is a specific demographic of people who support Israel without any religious or ethnic ties to the country. They advocate against terrorism... against Hamas. This conviction often comes at a high cost as they face ostracism, rejection by their own community, accusations of treason and even threats to their lives. Despite these challenges, they continue to uphold their beliefs. This admirable group is known as the Arabs who stand for peace in the face of terror.

"Hamas ruined our lives. In Israel, we live as equals. We live in peace. Hamas ruined that."

—Lila, an Arab woman living in Jerusalem
(name changed for security purposes)

"When I saw these events, I felt like I couldn't breathe. The horrors were beyond comprehension. I was in shock, like everyone else. I felt deeply ashamed that it came from my people. I felt the need to apologize. These are people who are supposed to be my partners. It's a bond that I wanted at that moment to break and cut myself off completely from these human monsters."

—Yosef Hadad, Israeli Arab and former IDF combat soldier, CEO of the Together—Vouch for Each Other association that works to connect the Arab Israeli community to the broader Israeli society

"Perhaps the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip should look at the Arab citizens of Israel and note how they enjoy equal rights, democracy, freedom of speech and a free media. If Palestinians wish to live well, like the Arab Israelis, this is the time for them to get rid of Hamas and all the terror leaders who, for seven decades, have brought them nothing but one disaster after another."

—Khaled Abu Toameh, an Arab Israeli journalist, lecturer, documentary filmmaker, producer and consultant for NBC News

"Anti-Hamas = Zionist. Call for coexistence = Zionist. Condemn Hamas = Zionist. Both sides' lives matter = Zionist. Sympathize with Israeli hostages = Zionist. How many definitions are there for Zionists? I forgot the most important one: Peace supporter = Zionist."

—Hamza, a Gazan civilian criticizing Hamas on social media

"Anyone who sees the destruction in Gaza...cannot but pray to Allah and ask him to curse all those who caused this destruction. How can we not curse Hamas and its leaders after they have destroyed every element



of dignified existence in the Gaza Strip?! When Hamas carried out its attack on October 7 and invaded the Israeli localities on the Gaza border, did it expect Israel to refrain from retaliating in force?"

— Majdi Abd Al-Wahhab, a Palestinian writer

"The Israeli victims of Hamas's October 7 massacre were not given a chance to flee through a safe corridor. No one called on Hamas to accept a 'humanitarian pause' as its terrorists were committing atrocities against Israelis that day in cities and towns near the Gaza Strip. The terrorists invaded Israel for one purpose: to murder, rape and behead as many Jews as possible."

— Bassam Tawil, Arab writer, and journalist based in the Middle East

"For the longest time, I struggled with my identity. A Palestinian kid born inside Israel. Many of my friends refuse to this day to say the word 'Israel' and call themselves 'Palestinian' only. But since I was 12, that did not make sense to me. So, I decided to mix the two and become a 'Palestinian-Israeli.' I thought this term reflected who I was. Palestinian first. Israeli second. But after recent events, I started to think. And think. And think. And then my thoughts turned to anger. I realized that if Israel were to be 'invaded' like that again, we would not be safe... And I do not want to live under a Palestinian government. Which means I only have one home, even if I'm not Jewish: Israel."

— Nuseir Yassin, Arab Israeli blogger known as 'Nas Daily' on social media platforms

"I'm an Israeli Arab... I'm embarrassed. And Hamas is to blame... This [Arabs identifying with Israel] demonstrates that the Arab community in Israel aspires to further integrate into society and distance itself from bad faith

actors like Hamas... Israeli Arabs and Jews are like salt and pepper: They both belong on the table, and once they're sprinkled into a dish it's almost impossible to distinguish between them."

— Prof. Mouna Maroun, vice president and dean of research at the University of Haifa and the former head of the Sagol Department of Neurobiology

"I think that we will achieve the mission by eliminating Hamas. Finally. And I think that the world also will see a better Middle East when this terrorist organization is eliminated."

— Yahya Mahamid, Arab Israeli speaker, educator, activist and IDF veteran

"Hamas did not use the children of Ismail Haniyeh, Khaled Mashaal or Ali Khamenei as human shields. Hamas used the Palestinian people [as human shields]."

— Ahdeya Ahmed Al Sayed, president of the Bahrain Journalists Association

"As the dimensions of these unimaginable sadistic horrors are uncovered, I ask you to believe me when I say that I want it to be clear to you and the whole world, that we stand as your brothers, as human beings, and as citizens of the country by your side... It is our simple and required moral and human duty to express abhorrence, to cry out loudly against unimaginable crimes. Our voice will be sharp, clear, unapologetic, unhesitant, unfaltering, without proportionality, with no ifs, ands, or buts. There are no dilemmas in the face of atrocities!"

— Louis Haj, Arab Israeli, social activist and high-tech executive

"When Hamas, an Islamist movement that had already carried out hundreds of terror attacks against Israeli civilians, took over Gaza and then continuously declared its intention to target Israel through militant actions/activities and to do everything possible to smuggle munitions and turn the Strip into a resistance citadel, of course there were going to be consequences, including wars and a siege/blockade. That would have been true whether it was Israel or any other nation—it is entirely predictable."

— Ahmed Fouad Al-Khatib, founder and executive director of Project Unified Assistance, Middle East political analyst, humanitarian activist and blogger born in Gaza and currently residing in the US

"All attacks against innocent civilians, women and children, including those of October 7, cannot be accepted by any Muslim. As I have previously stressed, we must make sure the horrors of the past few months since October 7 are never repeated, nor accepted by any human being."

— Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein, King of Jordan

"They said Bin Laden was a peace activist. They said Baghdadi was an austere scholar. Now Hamas are 'Freedom Fighters.' You have the right to oppose Israel. But for humanity's sake, don't sit on your brain."

— Mohammad Tawhidi, a Shia Muslim influencer known as the "Imam of Peace"

Zoë McHenry,
BFP Staff Writer



Tours

AUSTRALIA

EXPERIENCE ISRAEL TOUR October 27–November 9, 2024

Hosted by: Matthew Chivers

Join us for a life-changing experience as we take you on a journey through the land of the Bible and stand with Israel *“for such a time as this”* (Esther 4:14b). The tour includes many biblical sites, including Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, Nazareth, the Galilee and the Dead Sea. We will also participate in the anniversary of the Battle of Beersheva and the heroic charge of the Australian Light Horse Brigade as well as a special *Shabbat* (Sabbath) of a Lifetime dinner. Contact the office for a booking form.

UK

ISRAEL TOURS Dates available throughout 2024

Hosted by: Michael and Sian Treharne

Throughout 2024, we will host eight-day tours for small groups in Israel. We will also host a special walking tour in Israel and a visit to Poland. Contact the office for more information.

SEVEN CHURCHES OF REVELATION—TOUR OF TURKEY May 1–8, 2024

Hosted by: Michael Treharne

This trip follows the travels of the apostle Paul to the seven churches of Asia Minor mentioned in the book of Revelation.

UNITED STATES

LAND OF THE BIBLE STUDY TOUR 2025

March 16–29, 2025

Hosted by: Dr. Bill and Lizzie Adams

Travel the land of the Bible with your seasoned hosts Dr. Bill and Lizzie Adams and expert guide Allen Rabinowitz. Track the footsteps of Jesus, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the prophets and the apostles. This life-changing experience includes connecting with modern heroes of Israel, including a service opportunity in an Israeli community. Join us!

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF JESUS—ISRAEL STUDY TOUR

December 2–13, 2024

Hosted by: Rev. Jim Shuman and Dr. Frank T. Lenihan

Join us for this life-changing trip exploring the land of the Bible.

NEW ZEALAND

ISRAEL PILGRIMAGE TOUR To Be Announced

Hosted by: Beth Mather

Join us to experience the biblical and historical places of Israel for 13 days! The tour includes visiting the Jordan River, Masada, the Dead Sea, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Jaffa, Tel Aviv and many more. This will also be your opportunity to visit and be a blessing at Bridges for Peace in Jerusalem.

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- Home Repair Team
- Journalist
- Social Media Team
- Proofreader
- Publications Assistant

Out-from-Egypt Passover Lamb

Passover is one of the most joyous times of the year here in Israel. The festival commemorates God delivering the Israelites from slavery in Egypt with “a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm” (Deut. 26:8). Families gather together on the first night of Passover to eat a dinner called a *seder*, which literally means “order.” Traditional foods eaten during the *seder* include wine or grape juice, *matzah* or unleavened bread, *charoset* (a jam-like mixture) and, of course, lamb. Although every Jewish household has its own family recipe when it comes to Passover lamb, this one is guaranteed to have the guests at your *seder* table asking for more.

Ingredients:

- 1 leg of lamb (roughly 7.7 lbs. or 3.5 kg.)
- 2 large red onions, roughly chopped
- 5 cloves of garlic, roughly chopped
- 1 large bunch rosemary
- 1 Tbsp. ground black pepper
- Salt to taste
- ½ cup olive oil

Directions:

1. Pre-heat the oven to 392°F or 200°C.
2. Line a roasting tray with aluminum foil and baking paper.
3. Arrange the onion and garlic chunks on the bottom of the roasting tray and place the lamb on the vegetables.
4. Using a sharp knife, make several 2-inch-deep (5-cm-deep) cuts all over the surface of the lamb, and stuff each cut with a small sprig of rosemary. (You can also add a piece of garlic to each opening.)
5. Pour half the olive oil over the lamb and rub it into the meat.
6. Sprinkle over half the black pepper and salt.
7. Turn the lamb over and repeat the process with the rosemary sprigs, olive oil, salt and pepper on the other side.
8. Gather the sides of the aluminum foil and baking paper over the lamb to cover the meat.
9. Roast covered in the pre-heated oven for three hours.
10. Remove the aluminum foil and baking paper, and allow the lamb to rest uncovered for approximately 15 minutes.
11. Slice and serve with rice or potatoes.

Serves up to 10 people



UNITY IN TIME OF TROUBLE

Israel's Hidden Strength

IN EVERY CULTURE there are unique expressions, words that help paint a picture of the character of the members of that people group. For the Jewish people, "*Hazak, hazak v'nithazek*" is just such a phrase. Translated, these Hebrew words mean: "Be strong, be strong and may we be strengthened." And strength has certainly been necessary to ensure the survival of the Jewish people over the thousands of years since they were forcibly removed from their homeland.

Repetition Equals Emphasis

At the sound of this phrase, the listener's attention is drawn to a repetition of words. This is a linguistic tool often used for emphasis. The characteristic we are considering is that of strength or *hazak*, not only physical but also inner steadfastness. So why is the word *hazak* repeated?

Rabbi Avi Weiss offers this explanation: "Most interpret these words to speak first to the individual, and then to the collective whole. *Hazak* is a singular term. When uttered twice it creates a sense of community. Hence, *ve-nithazek*—**together we** will gain greater strength and prevail" (emphasis added).

Our phrase thus begins with the individual, acknowledges his or her role in the community and then concludes that the group will be strengthened by those who make up the collective whole.

Where Did the Saying Originate?

Although the complete phrase, “*Hazak, hazak v’nithazek*,” is not found in Scripture, the concept is definitely biblical. The word *hazak* appears 290 times in the Bible and is primarily defined by *Strong’s Concordance* as “strong (48 times), strengthened (28 times) and strengthen (14 times).”

The first time we see the word *hazak* used in the form of a command is when the Lord spoke to Joshua as he prepared to lead the people into the Promised Land, “*Be strong [hazak] and of good courage*” (Josh. 1:6a). Another example is found when Joab, one of King David’s mighty men, encouraged the Israelite army which was facing a much larger force, “*Be of good courage, and let us be strong [hazak] for our people*” (2 Sam. 10:12a).

Distinctly Different

The Jews have been a distinct people, set apart by God Himself, since Abraham lived in Canaan. Shortly after their exodus from Egypt, Moses acknowledged this fact as he spoke to God. “*So we shall be separate, Your people and I, from all the people who are upon the face of the earth*” (Exod. 33:16b emphasis added). It requires backbone and determination to be different from everyone else—an inner strength.

The word *hazak* is a command, the imperative form of that verb. Over the millennia since their dispersion, the Jewish people have had no choice but to be strong and resolute as they have faced a world that has often rejected their existence. It is a strength that has baffled many, as this group of people—comprising no more than 0.2% of the world’s total population—has survived intact. In the words of Natan Sharansky, a former Prisoner of Zion (Jews who suffered imprisonment or deportation for Zionist activity in countries where such activity was prohibited), “There is no power in the world that can stand against us when we feel a part of our history, part of our people and part of this historic struggle.”

In a War for Survival

Today, Israel is in a war for its survival as a nation, and the strength and unity of its people is critical. Much of the world chooses not to believe the truth about the terrorist organizations that are seeking to remove any and all Jewish people from Israel. Anti-Semitism is increasing dramatically and many Jews in the Diaspora (Jewish population outside of Israel) live in fear of displaying any evidence of their heritage. Recently, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke to a group undergoing training to become commanders in the Israel Defense Forces. He told them, “Each one of you carries on your shoulders the destiny of the people of Israel and of the State of Israel. This is no exaggeration.”

Strength in Action

The Israeli population living along the Gazan border paid a heavy price on October 7. In addition to the unspeakable horror of that day, there were aftereffects as well. Much of Israel’s



Pomegranate harvesting in the south was a success thanks to Israeli volunteers.

food supply comes from farms in the area, which was now the frontline of a raging battle for the nation’s survival. Without the foreign workers as well as the Palestinian laborers, the agricultural sector faced a crisis of its own. Who would work the fields and bring in the harvest?

Faced with the prospective loss of his pomegranate crop due to the lack of workers, orchard owner Assaf Tzur put out a plea on social media for help. Later, he told *Voice of America* in an interview about the response, “We were really surprised and really excited that so many people, all around Israel, just came and asked to help us—us!” Assaf’s story is not an isolated incident.

During the weeks after the war broke out, countless Israelis spent time working on the rich farmland of the south. They were not experienced farmers, but they came anyway. Young and old, from fashion designers to high tech workers and more, all took time away from their daily routines and came to help strengthen Israeli farmers as they worked to save the crops. This is just one example of “*Hazak, hazak v’nithazek*” in action.

Foundation of Hope

This is the “Good News” page and we will therefore end on a positive note. One of my favorite Scripture verses, a solid promise of God which lays a foundation for the hope expressed in the words “*Hazak, hazak v’nithazek*” reads, “*I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them,*” says the LORD your God” (Amos 9:15 emphasis added).

Whatever the situation, whoever the enemy, God’s Word is the best reason for the Jewish people to encourage each other with the words: “*Hazak, hazak v’nithazek*.”



Janet Aslin,
BFP Staff Writer

Partner with us to Bless Israel



ADOPTION

Sponsor an Israeli individual or family for one year. Your gift will provide food, bus tickets, financial assistance for special needs and much needed encouragement.



PROJECT RESCUE

Help the Jewish people of the Diaspora return home to Israel. Your financial assistance helps pay for passports, visas, ground transportation, lodging and more.



CRISIS ASSISTANCE FUND

On October 7, many in Israel lost their homes and livelihoods. Please donate to help those affected.



FEED A CHILD

Consider sponsoring a child living in poverty to ensure they have access to basic needs and opportunities for a better life.



FOOD

You can help feed over 24,000 needy Israelis in 40 communities every month by supporting our Food Bank in Jerusalem.



VICTIMS OF TERROR

With your donations, we assist those impacted by terrorism with cheer baskets, wheelchairs, food vouchers, and various forms of financial aid.



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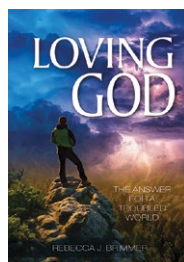
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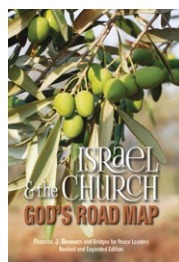
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Rebecca J. Brimmer

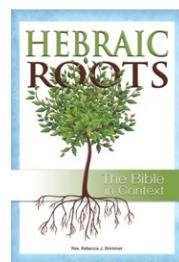
This book explores how Jesus' truth provides the answers our troubled world needs.



ISRAEL & THE CHURCH: GOD'S ROAD MAP

Rebecca J. Brimmer & BFP Leaders

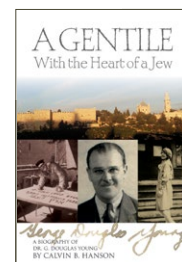
Excellent for small group or personal study. This book includes study questions.



HEBRAIC ROOTS: THE BIBLE IN CONTEXT

Rebecca J. Brimmer

Concepts that are sometimes complex and foreign to our Western worldview are explained from a Hebraic perspective.



A GENTILE WITH THE HEART OF A JEW

Calvin B. Hanson

The life of Dr. G. Douglas Young, founder of Bridges for Peace, will inspire you to stand with Israel.



SCRIBES & SCHOLARS

Cheryl Hauer

Learn about the Hebrew language: write it, speak it, mix your own ink and make a biblical scroll. Includes fun activities and 40 Hebrew flash cards. (Ages 11-14)



ISRAEL: THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

Cheryl Hauer

Through puzzles, games, crafts and other activities, children will learn about Israel's land, people, food and language...and have fun doing it! (Ages 7-12)



THE BLESSING

Carol Sadler

Join a Jewish family as they joyfully share their *Shabbat* (Sabbath) traditions. The fourth commandment will become personal as your family learns to experience God's rest. (Ages 7-12)



CELEBRATE WITH ISRAEL HOLIDAY COLORING BOOK

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Children will experience the joy and excitement of Israel's festival cycle through our holiday coloring book, a great introduction to life in Israel.



TRIBES OF ISRAEL

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Well-known Bible stories come alive as your children read about the tribal lifestyle of the patriarchs. The book includes activities that will enrich their understanding. (Ages 11-14)

Comfort Israel

BUILD UP ZION

Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem (Psalm 51:18 ESV).

Building a wall takes intentional and careful planning. But preparing for your legacy in Israel does not have to be difficult. For simple charitable gift and estate planning strategies, visit bfplegacy.org.

- Download or request your FREE Estate Planning Guide
- Sign up for our gift planning eNewsletter
- Use our calculators to view personal illustrations for gift models like gift annuities and trusts



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ZEALOUS 8:2

