

Dispatch from Jerusalem

A Publication of Bridges for Peace

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Dousing Iran's Ring of Fire

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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).

Bridge-building Projects: Promote better Christian-Jewish understanding and support for Israel at the local and regional levels around the world. Projects offered include Hebrew classes, film series, Israel awareness programs, speakers bureaus and study seminars.

Bible Study Tours in Israel: Bridges for Peace provides a variety of travel opportunities and lectures to help you or your tour group gain a deeper understanding of Israel. (See page 28 for current tours).

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

Short-term Service: A wonderful opportunity for Christians to build sincere relationships by volunteering to serve as short-term staff assisting Israel's poor.

Operation Ezra Projects: Through our food bank, food gifts are distributed to help Israel's needy.

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

ZEALOUS8:2: This branch of Bridges for Peace aims at reaching and impacting the young adult generation (18-30) with the message of God's plan and purpose for the nation of Israel (www.zealous82.com).

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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10 Pogroms: History Repeating Itself

Webster's Dictionary defines a "pogrom" as "an organized massacre of helpless people," specifically Jewish people. Nearly 70 years after Kristallnacht, the infamous German pogrom in 1938, Jews are once again the targets of violent antisemitism on the world's city streets.

By Kate Norman

12 To Life!

In every generation, the world's ancient hatred manifested in human form to present the Jew as so irreversibly evil that the only remedy was complete annihilation. This generation is no different. Yet in a stab at political correctness, antisemitism masquerades as anti-Zionism and calls for complete annihilation of the Jewish state.

By Ilse Strauss

14 Dousing Iran's Ring of Fire

Thirteen years after the Syrian Civil War began, the conflict came to an abrupt finale—against all odds and all in just over a week. As the war-weary nation looks to a brighter future, the Iranian *mullahs* mourn Assad's fall, the end of the civil war and the prospect of a stable Syria. The reason for the sour grapes? Israel, of course.

By Ilse Strauss

18 They Never Forgot Jerusalem

In the eighth century BC, the Assyrians resettled communities from the northern kingdom of Israel in Kurdistan. Throughout the centuries, these Jews retained their faith, and never forgot their homeland. When the modern State of Israel was born, the Kurdish Jews returned to the Land they had left over 2,500 years before.

By Janet Aslin

20 The Officers of the IDF

As exemplified by its young IDF commanders, Israel has to be tough enough to repel an invasion while remaining compassionate enough to heal the hurting. Defenders of the nation, builders of the society, and keepers of the peace, the junior officer corps forms the backbone of the nation God has regathered—for the sake of His name.

By Dr. Bill Adams

22 Check in on Your Jewish Friends

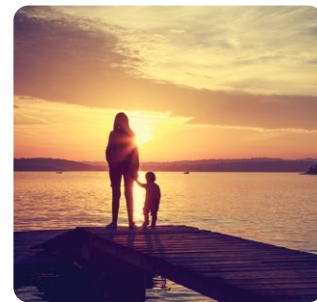
As antisemitism and hatred continue rising around the world, Jewish people in Israel and the Diaspora (Jewish population outside Israel) now more than ever need to know that they have the support of their non-Jewish friends. Regardless of your feelings toward Israel and Zionism, check in on your Jewish friends.

By Kate Norman

24 The Group No One Wants to Join

Since October 2023, there have been 890 uniformed Israeli casualties, mostly men. They served in the army, police force and infiltrated communities' emergency squads. They left behind 1,590 bereaved parents, 306 widows and 645 orphans. Israeli families and the Israeli society have changed forever.

By Rebecca J. Brimmer



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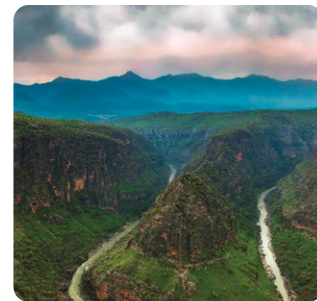


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NEVER AGAIN IS NOW



FOR OVER A YEAR, Israel has been attacked on seven fronts: Hezbollah in Lebanon; Hamas in Gaza and Judea and Samaria (the West Bank); Houthis in Yemen; the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in Iraq and Syria; and directly by the Iranian regime. Against all odds, Israel endures.

Despite the horrific events of October 7, 2023, the rising death toll of soldiers who have fallen defending the nation of Israel and the ongoing crisis of 101 hostages remaining in Gaza under the torturous control of Hamas, Israel is pressing forward with victory and success in crushing its enemies. Behind this clear power of military might and brilliant strategic intelligence lies the true source of power: the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob! Israel will be victorious because the God of Israel defends His covenantal nation, as Psalm 83 passionately declares.

However, there is an eighth front against Israel and the Jewish community that many people have not considered: the daily attacks and calls for violence against the Jewish people in the nations. Painted with the same distorted, hateful brush that comes against Israel, Jewish communities worldwide are under attack, whether through rhetoric, marches, social media or outright violence.

Recently in Amsterdam, Netherlands, hundreds of radical Muslims attacked Israeli football fans, beating them with clubs, bars and fists. The mob chased the Israelis through the streets, kicked them to the ground until they stopped moving, hounded them on trams and launched fireworks at their hotel windows. They cornered people demanding, “Are you Jewish?” They then proceeded to terrorize everyone suspected of being Israeli. This immediately prompted Israel to send rescue planes and medical staff from Magen David Adom (Israel’s national emergency and ambulance service) to assist the bloodied Israelis who showed up at the Amsterdam airport the next day and airlift them back to Israel.



Montreal, Canada

In Montreal, Canada, thousands of protesters wearing masks and *keffiyehs* while waving Palestinian flags charged through the city center burning cars, smashing windows and chanting slogans about slaughtering Jews. Caught on film, protestors gave the *Sieg Heil* (Nazi salute) or called for the Final Solution against the Jewish community,

a reference to the 1942 policy of Nazi Germany’s Third Reich to annihilate all Jews. The Nazis implemented this policy with terrifying success. By 1945, two out of every three European Jews had been murdered—over six million Jewish people in total.

Video after video has shown Jews—whether in North America or Europe—being told that their presence on city streets will “incite violence” as rabid, antisemitic protestors bay for Jewish blood and the destruction of Israel.

One of the key functions of the International Criminal Court (ICC) is to bring war criminals who live in nations with failed, corrupt judicial systems to justice. Yet the ICC recently demonstrated its immoral, antisemitic depravity by issuing arrest warrants for Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant. This hearkens to the Scripture found in Judges 17:6b, “...every man did what was right in his own eyes” (NASB).

Amidst the turmoil, millions of Christians are at the forefront, declaring with a resounding voice, “Israel, you are not alone!” I recently spoke at Bridges for Peace Canada’s annual fundraising gala and this was the theme of the evening. Before a hall filled with Jews and Christians, I told them of how Bridges for Peace has donated ambulances, thousands of bags of food and clothing, trauma care support for survivors, appliances for members of displaced communities and much more as we respond with compassion to a traumatized nation.

I reminded them of the love and prayers of Christians from all around the world who stand with them, attend rallies to free the hostages and prayer vigils, speak up in their communities, share from pulpits in churches, take to social media and so much more. Through tears, I recounted the dark days following October 7, 2023, and reminded them of what God is doing



Bridges for Peace responds with care and compassion to a traumatized nation.

in our world as He draws us together for His glory. I pray that my words of love and support, along with those from our teams worldwide, are a deep source of comfort and hope for Jewish people everywhere.

Yet it is no secret that Jewish people throughout the nations feel vulnerable, alone, hated and afraid. As we move into 2025, Israel is expecting a spike in *aliyah* (immigration to Israel), as thousands from countries such as France, Russia, the UK and the USA are expected to return to the Land of their promise. As Christians, we need to count the cost of siding with Israel. We need to stand with our Jewish brothers and sisters in the nations with support, love and solidarity. History will not forgive us if we abandon them in their time of need. For the sake of our nations, our faith in Jesus (Yeshua), our being grafted into the olive tree of Israel (Rom. 11) and biblical truth, we cannot fail by being silent in the face of evil. We have seen the cost of silence throughout history. **Never again is now!**

God is calling out to the Church to discern truth and push back the darkness of antisemitism. God is regathering His people to His Land, just as He promised through the prophet Isaiah (11:12) and He is demonstrating His wonders every day. The prophets foretold of righteous non-Jews who worship the God of Israel and attach themselves with love to the Jewish people (Zech. 2:10–13). Will this be you? Please give to our **Project Rescue fund** and help the Jewish people return to their ancestral homeland.

With shalom,
Rev. Peter J. Fast
International CEO





ISRAEL-BASHING: WHERE LOGIC DOES NOT APPLY

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL is mistaken for a human-rights organization. It has mastered the art of generating headlines and stirring outrage with incendiary claims about Israel. Amnesty can count on the media to uncritically parrot whatever conclusions it publishes, no matter how baseless.

The latest example is the group's accusation that Israel is engaged in "genocide." The report recycles an absurd charge that was leveled against Israel long before October 7, 2023, and regurgitates it with an equal lack of evidence.

"Genocide" refers to the intentional destruction of a national, ethnic, racial or religious group. If Israel were committed to genocide, there would be no Palestinians left—yet we see the Palestinian population has grown significantly over the years, with no indication of a systematic effort to exterminate them.

In 1949, Israel's Muslim population was around 112,000, less than 10% of the population. Today, that figure stands at 2.1 million, more than 21% of the population.

What about the data for the disputed territories?

The accuracy of the population statistics is debated, but let's use data from the United Nations. It indicates the Palestinian population has grown from less than 1.2 million in 1968 to nearly 5.5 million in 2024—an almost 400% increase. How does this align with the claim of genocide?

What about Amnesty's assertion that Israel is now intent on the destruction of the Palestinian people?

Like the media, Amnesty International relies on the casualty statistics fabricated by the Hamas-run health ministry. These figures are bogus because they do not distinguish between civilians and terrorists. The agency admitted it could

not determine how many casualties were "fighters" (according to Amnesty, people who massacre Jews cannot be called terrorists).

All journalists know this, and sometimes they note the data is flawed in passing, but they dispense with the need to investigate by saying the information is unverified.

Still, bizarrely, even as Amnesty International, the media and the Hamas cheerleaders demonize the Israel Defense Forces [IDF] for its lethality, none acknowledges their view implies that Israel must have the world's most incompetent army to have fought for more than a year without killing a single combatant.

If we accept Hamas's claim at face value, as Amnesty did—that 40,717 Palestinians have been killed—we can use elementary-school math to disprove its conclusion.

According to most sources, the population of Gaza is more than 2 million. This means in their supposed genocidal rage, the IDF has killed 2% of the population. Israel estimates that it has killed some 18,000 "fighters" (a figure rarely acknowledged in the Western media), which means the number of civilian dead is still tragic: 22,717. But 99% of the population that is not terrorists is still alive.

The ratio of civilian deaths to combatants is remarkably low when compared to other military conflicts, which is precisely the opposite of the way the conflict has been portrayed. That fact is even more remarkable given that the war has been conducted in a dense urban environment where Hamas has used civilians as human shields.

Mitchell Bard, *Jewish News Syndicate*

STUDY: TWO-THIRDS OF JEWISH WOMEN SURVEYED FEEL IMPACT OF JEW-HATRED



NEARLY TWO-THIRDS (64%) of Jewish women surveyed by Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, reported that antisemitism had impacted their work, lives or relationships, according to new data released by the organization in December.

More than 1,000 people responded to the survey.

It also found that 62% said they had felt physically or psychologically unsafe, and 52% of Jewish women reported hiding being Jewish.

"Every day, Jewish women are suffering in silence, isolation and fear as they live in the shadows of hate," said Carol Ann Schwartz, national president of Hadassah.

In addition, 33% said they had experienced hate due to their Jewish or Zionist identity, and 22% said they had been excluded from groups or events because of their identity.

Jewish News Syndicate

NO MENTION OF HAMAS IN GAZA 'JUSTICE' PHOTO SHOW AT UN

THE PHOTO EXHIBIT "Gaza, Palestine: A Crisis of Humanity, a Cry for Justice" in the lobby of United Nations [UN] headquarters in Manhattan includes images of demolished buildings, displaced civilians, maimed children and corpses. It mentions neither Hamas nor the terror group's October 7 terrorist attacks in southern Israel that launched the war upon which the exhibit focuses.

"This was written by the Palestinian mission to the UN and in this long, long text, you won't find the word 'Hamas' in it," Jonathan Harounoff, international spokesman for Israel's mission to the global body, told *JNS*. "You won't find any mention of the perpetrators of the attacks of October 7, 2023."

"It's very selective in the history it is trying to portray, and the exhibit includes graphic imagery of everything that took place following October 7, but they never mention what actually happened to lead to all of this," Harounoff said.

The Jewish state isn't engaged in the war "to bring suffering upon the people of Gaza. That's not its objective. Its objective is to prevent terrorist organizations like Hamas from terrorizing its people which it did when it infiltrated Israel on October 7," he said.

Harounoff pointed to a photograph by Yasser Qudih—whose presence during the October 7 attacks has raised ethical questions—which depicts children holding empty bowls, hoping in vain for food, near Rafah. "It did not take long for the food to run out," a caption states.



"Pictures like this in this exhibit, showcasing children who are starving and desperate for food, fail to mention that the reason the photographed children have no food is because Hamas terrorists continually loot aid in Gaza instead of feeding their own people," Harounoff said.

Other exhibits in the UN lobby tend to have highly visible signs with disclaimers stating that the UN does not necessarily share the views articulated in the exhibitions.

The Gaza exhibit "has only a very small footnote saying the UN doesn't necessarily share the viewpoints of the exhibit organizer," Harounoff said. "When the Israeli mission held an exhibit featuring Israeli mothers speaking about the loss of their children, we...had to have a large sign letting the public know this exhibit reflected our mission's views alone."

That double standard suggests that the UN endorses the messaging behind the Gaza exhibit, according to Harounoff.

Danny Danon, the Israeli ambassador to the UN, stated that the Gaza exhibit represents "diplomatic terrorism."

Vita Fellig, Jewish News Syndicate



Left to right: The Pilgrim's Road; jars from the 3,300-year-old cargo ship; an 1,800-year-old bronze ring

TENS OF THOUSANDS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL TREASURES UNEARTHED DESPITE WAR

AMID THE ONGOING WARS against Hamas and Hezbollah, countless artifacts from the Second Temple era, the Late Roman period and more were uncovered across Israel in 2024.

“Despite the difficult year we experienced due to the war, the Israel Antiquities Authority [IAA] continued to carry out rescue excavations throughout the country,” said the body’s Director General Eli Escusido.

“Over the past year, approximately 120 sites were excavated (compared to the usual average of 250–300 in a regular year), where tens of thousands of significant finds were uncovered, ranging from prehistoric periods to modern times. The most notable excavations were in Jerusalem—in the City of David and the Ophel Garden—Yavne, Yehud, Kiryat Gat, Caesarea and more,” he added.

The IAA has donated some of its findings to museums and research institutes across Israel for visitors to enjoy.

The IAA also offers a volunteer program for individuals over the age of 18 who want to get in on the action and

be a part of a team uncovering the past. There are additional companies and tour operators throughout Israel that offer excavating experiences for all types of travelers.

“This region has an incredibly rich and vast history that dates back thousands of years, including all the way to the time of the Bible and beyond. Sites are regularly uncovered, helping archaeologists piece together the story of the land’s ancient history of cultures, religions and historic leaders,” said Dina Orenbach, consul and director of the Western Region of the United States for the Israeli Ministry of Tourism.

“Our country is filled with wondrous artifacts, and if you feel like rolling up your sleeves and being an active participant, you might consider joining a ‘dig for a day’ or a guided archaeological dig. The incredible historical and religious landmarks discovered in Israel will resonate with people from around the world,” she added.

The extraordinary artifacts archeologists have discovered in Israel this year include, among others:



Left to right: A stone container used for commercial purposes; a black stone seal; kitchenware found in an ancient drainage channel

Walk Where Jesus Walked

In Mount Hotzvim in northern Jerusalem, a group of archaeologists in an excavation project with the IAA discovered an array of rocks and a paved road that dates back to the end of the Second Temple period. This discovery matches another creation uncovered in 2019 called the “Pilgrim’s Road,” which is believed to have been walked on by Jesus in ancient Jerusalem.

Ancient Sails in the Desert

Found 56 miles [90 km.] away from Israel’s Mediterranean Sea shore, a 3,300-year-old cargo ship was discovered during a standard survey executed by Energean plc, an international hydrocarbon exploration and production company with a focus on natural gas, and was donated to the IAA. This ship dates back to the Late Bronze Era, a time with only two documented shipwrecks in the Mediterranean Sea, and was found intact after years of sitting on the sea floor.

With this Ring

Yair Whiteson, 13, was hiking in Haifa and discovered an 1,800-year-old bronze ring engraved with an image of the Greek goddess Athena, which is believed to have been owned by woman or girl during the Late Roman period. This ring was given to the IAA and is now on display for visitors as part of the IAA summer tours at the Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein National Campus for the Archaeology of Israel in Jerusalem, adjacent to the Israel Museum.

Merchants of Antiquity Plying Their Wares

In a recent excavation, a multi-compartment stone container, dating back 2,000 years to the days of the Second Temple, was discovered and is now on display at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem for visitors to view. Based on research conducted by the IAA, it is believed that this box was used for commercial purposes, as a way for merchants to display their products, and highlights daily life and trade during this period.

Sealed Thousands of Years Ago

A black stone seal was discovered in the City of David National Park by the IAA. The seal dates back 2,700 years to the time of the First Temple. It proves that literacy was not exclusive to upper-class citizens and that individuals at all class levels had basic knowledge of reading and writing. The seal depicts a winged genie, providing insight to the cultural zeitgeist in the region during the seventh and eighth centuries BC. The seal is marked with the first and last name of the seal’s original owner, Yeho’ezer ben Hosh’ayahu.

A Glimpse of a Jerusalem Kitchen

In August, the IAA announced it discovered Jewish kitchenware in Jerusalem’s ancient drainage channel, which ran through the city’s main street during the time of the Second Temple. Archaeologists found expensive oils, grape seeds and 2,000-year-old eggshells outside the Old City walls, which showcases evidence of daily life during a time of rebellion against the Roman Empire.



The day after Kristallnacht in November 1938

POGROMS: History Repeating Itself



Anti-Israel protest New York in 2024

ON THE NIGHT OF NOVEMBER 6, 2024, Maccabi Tel Aviv football club fans left the stadium in Amsterdam after a match between the Israeli team and the local team, Ajax.

They flooded into the streets to find what the city's mayor described as "antisemitic hit-and-run squads" waiting. Multiple gangs of rioters screaming "Free Palestine," many of whom victims described as Muslims or Arabs, proceeded to chase anyone identifiably Jewish.

Victims and witnesses described beatings and attempted car-rammings and stabbings. Taxi drivers took Jews into the

violence rather than away to safety. People jumped into Amsterdam's canals to avoid the mobs. Others sought shelter in hotels, casinos and restaurants until they could safely make their way to the airport and home to Israel.

"It was a pogrom," a Maccabi fan told *Haaretz*, as quoted by the *Times of Israel*. "If there had been internet in '38, that's what Kristallnacht would have looked like," he said, referencing the infamous German pogrom, when Nazis rampaged through the streets, smashed windows of Jewish shops, homes and synagogues and rounded up Jews to ship off to concentration camps.

Sixty-eight years later, in the city where Anne Frank and her family hid and were later discovered and sent to death camps, Jews were again targets of antisemitism. Israeli officials said 10 people were injured in the widespread, organized attacks. Police were present but did little, witnesses reported. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sent rescue flights to bring Israelis home.

History of the **POGROMS**

Webster's Dictionary defines the word “pogrom” as “an organized massacre of helpless people,” specifically Jewish people. It is a Russian word, meaning “to wreak havoc, destroy violently,” which entered popular vocabulary between the 1880s and the 1920s with three waves of violence against Jewish communities in Russia and Eastern Europe.

They began in 1881 after Czar Alexander II was assassinated and rumors spread that Jews were the culprits. The violence broke out in Yelisavetgrad, Ukraine, when a mob rampaged through the Jewish quarter of the city, destroying shops. The Jewish population had asked local soldiers for help, according to *Jewish Encyclopedia*, but instead the soldiers joined the rioting, which devolved into destruction of synagogues, raping and looting. At least three people died, and 500 houses and 100 shops were demolished. The rioting spread to some 30 other villages and towns across Ukraine, including Kyiv.

The second wave of pogroms flared up in 1902 in Cześćochowa, Poland, when locals rampaged through the Jewish open market, looting warehouses and injuring several people. During Passover 1903, a riot broke out in Kishinev (Chisinau) after local newspaper *Bessarabets* had stoked the fire with antisemitic articles, including one written by the police chief. When a local Christian child was found dead, a false blood libel spread that Jews were responsible. Rioters assaulted the Jewish population, unhindered by some 5,000 soldiers stationed there, according to Jewish Virtual Library.org. Officials reported 49 Jewish people dead, 500 injured, 700 houses destroyed and looted and 600 shops looted.

More pogroms erupted throughout the next few years, including in Kyiv in 1905, when a contentious city hall meeting devolved into an angry mob blaming all of Russia's problems on Jews and socialists. Some 100 Jewish people were killed in the aftermath.

Similar pogroms, violence and riots targeting Jewish communities raged throughout the aftermath of World War I, the interwar period and following World War II and the Holocaust—many with more deadly effects, as the mobs focused less on destroying Jewish property and more on people.

Between 1918 and 1921 alone, Ukrainian peasants and soldiers murdered more than 100,000 Jews, blaming them for the Russian Revolution, a professor of history wrote for Washington University.

But what caused these explosions of pogroms against Jewish communities?

CAUSE AND EFFECT

Blaming Jewish people for the world's problems dates back to the Black Death in 14th century Europe, when one of

the earliest blood libels claimed that Jews poisoned wells and caused the deaths of some 40% of Europe's population. This lie sparked outrage that resulted in massacres of thousands of Jews across Western Europe.

Fast-forwarding to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, we can see how this ancient hatred continued. This time, the Jews were in the right positions at the wrong time. Dominating the moneylending and trade industries in the Russian Empire, the Center for Economic Policy Research postulates that Jews became the victims of violence when severe crop failures threatened social order. Once again, people needed a scapegoat on which to unleash their anger.

Starting with the bubonic plague, Jew-hatred ebbed and flowed across Europe and the world through the Crusades, Inquisition, pogroms, Holocaust, Hamas massacre on October 7 and its aftermath—including the violence in the streets of Amsterdam.

FINDING SAFETY in the Homeland

The pogroms of 1881 sparked mass emigration from the Russian Empire to the US and other countries, but it particularly lit the flames of Zionism, as more Jews now desired to return to their ancient homeland. And after each subsequent wave of violence, that flame increased.

Following the Hamas massacre on October 7, 2023 and the ensuing war, emigration from Israel surged. In the month after the massacre, some 12,300 Israelis left, according to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics—a 285% increase from the 3,200 in the same period the previous year. The numbers stabilized over the next few months, however.

However, the Jewish people outside Israel also felt the effects of the war.

“On October 7, a war erupted not against the State of Israel, but against the Jewish people,” World Zionist Organization chairman Yaakov Hagoel told a planeload of 150 Jewish immigrants from France in August. “Today, in many countries around the world, it is hard to be a Jew, whether at school, at work, or at prayer.”

Immediately following the war, *aliyah* (immigration to Israel) numbers dipped, but have since started growing again. Hagoel told the *Times of Israel* in August that nearly 30,000 people made *aliyah* since October 7, 2023.

In September 2023, just a month before the Hamas attack, US President Joe Biden stated: “I think without Israel, there's not a Jew in the world who's secure. I think Israel is essential.”

The director of the David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies in Washington, DC, Rafael Medoff, explained to the *Times of Israel* that “President Biden was simply reiterating the obvious fact that it's good there is an Israel to which persecuted Jews can flee. We all know what happened in the 1930s and 1940s when there was no Jewish state.



Kate Norman, *BFP Writer*

To Life!



Jenan Matari

JENAN MATARI WRUNG HER HANDS uneasily as she peered bravely into the camera. “This is a very heavy, uncomfortable video,” she began. Matari paused briefly, as if bracing under the burden of the message she was about to deliver.

“We’re going to talk about the existence of Israel as a sadist entity as a whole,” she announced, hands now red from the tormented wringing. “Sadism is the tendency to derive pleasure...[from] inflicting pain, suffering, violence or humiliation on someone else... Israeli society as a whole operates off of the dehumanization and humiliation of Palestinians, and Israelis have made it very, very clear that they enjoy it. That is the very definition of sadism.”

Matari identifies as an Arab-American, writer, content creator, influencer and a whole host of other things. But there’s one thing missing from her resume: she hasn’t spent any length of time living among Israelis in Israel to familiarize herself with Israeli society.

The sorry lack of first-hand knowledge doesn’t deter her though. In the video uploaded to her Instagram account, she confidently unpacks her analysis based on social media posts from individual Israelis taken grossly out of context, sprinkles in some false yet titillating claims and presents her emotive fabrications as fact.

Matari is far from a lone voice. Defining Israeli society as sadistic to the core is a hot button topic for pro-Palestinian voices. And they often draw the conclusion that Israel is entirely inhabited by intrinsically evil human beings, a society so irreversibly brutal that the only solution to cleanse the rest of the world from its vile presence is that Israel “cannot exist,” to quote Matari.

Guilty Regardless?

The past 18 months have been a prime example of good lauded as evil and evil as good (Isa. 5:20). In a bizarre switch, the anti-Israel lobby accuses Jerusalem of the very crimes its enemies commit. While Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthis—orchestrated by Iran—lob missiles at civilians, world bodies decry

Israel’s pinpoint strikes on terror strongholds. As evidence mounts of Israel’s enemies employing rape and sodomy as a weapon of war, demonstrators protest Israeli soldiers’ alleged sexual misconduct. While Iran’s terror proxies hide behind civilians as human shields, Israel bends over backwards to preserve human life—even to its own detriment.

This begs the question: if Israel knows it will be held accountable for false accusations—of carpet bombing civilian areas, indiscriminate killing, genocide and everything else that’s despicable—why go above and beyond, put its own soldiers in harm’s way and invest significant time, effort and finances into what military experts describe as an example of morality and ethics?

A father-of-three who was called up in the aftermath of the October 7 massacre and spent months on the front lines gave me the answer. “This war won’t last forever. And I won’t be a soldier forever. But I’ll be a father, husband and human being for the rest of my life. I want to be the man my sons look up to, who my wife respects, who I respect, someone who upheld the values of who we are as a people and what we cherish. Our enemies have taken a lot from us, but they won’t take our humanity.”

In Their DNA

Col. (ret.) Richard Kemp famously hailed the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) as the most moral army in the world. The former British commander ascribes the IDF’s unprecedented ethics to two factors.

“In most armies, everyone chose to be soldiers. The IDF is composed overwhelmingly of citizen soldiers—from professors to plumbers—who defend their homes. They don’t want to go into battle. They have to because their country is under threat.”

The second, is the major influence of Judaism. Although the majority of Israelis identify as secular, the term simply means they don’t ascribe to all religious practices, not that they don’t believe in God or follow His ways.

According to Kemp, Jewish morals and values are intrinsically interwoven into the fabric of Israeli

Complete annihilation of Jewish state

Israel helping the world with emergency assistance in natural disasters.

Haiti
Japan
Turkey
Too many to document

J-Tsunami
H-Earthquake



T-Earthquake

society, much like Christian standards imbue Western civilizations. But whereas Christian influence has waned recently, the virtues of Judaism continue to permeate every aspect of Israeli society. And one of the cornerstones ingrained in the moral fiber of Israel's makeup is the sanctity of life—any life.

In His Image

“For over 3,000 years, the Jewish people have lived the Hebrew biblical foundations of the sanctity of life and the dignity of every human being as the image of God,” explains Rabbi David Nekrutman, executive director of the Isaiah Projects. Genesis 1:27 is at the core of the Hebrew expression of *Kavod Habriyot*, which entails that every person is created in G-d's image and thus endowed with and deserving of honor and dignity.”

The *Talmud* (rabbinic commentary on the Hebrew Scriptures), teaches: “Whosoever saves a life, it is as though he had saved the entire world” (Sanhedrin 37a). The *Mishna* (first written recording of Jewish tradition) gives us even greater detail, “Whoever destroys a single life is considered...to have destroyed the whole world, and whoever saves a single life is considered...to have saved the whole world.”

This value runs like a golden thread through the history of Israel. It is the lens through which Israelis view reality and colors everything from warfare to fields of study.

Consider this: The Jewish nation is tiny, its total citizens less than 1/1000th of the world's population. Yet its contribution to humanity has been astounding; its innovations touching the areas of mankind's greatest need. And each one is aimed at saving or prospering a life—so that an entire world is saved.

Children from developing nations receive life-saving treatment in Israel. Around the world, the hungry are fed, droughts defeated, emergency assistance in natural disasters received—all because of Israeli technology and compassion. Physically disabled, burn victims, cancer patients, those suffering Alzheimer's, diabetes or post-traumatic stress—have all received life-changing help from Israel.

During wartime, Israel drops warning leaflets, makes phone calls and calls off missions in order to preserve civilian life. Yahya Sinwar, architect of the October 7 massacre, received lifesaving surgery in Israel to remove a brain tumor. All this because of the sanctity of life—any life.

Same Evil, Different Generation

In every generation, the world's ancient hatred manifested in human form to present the Jew as so irreversibly base and brutal that the only remedy was complete annihilation. Sadly, this generation is no different. Yet in a stab at political correctness, anti-semitism masquerades as anti-Zionism and calls for complete annihilation of the Jewish state. Matari and her ilk might view themselves as innovative, alerting the world of a troubling truth. Yet they're merely picking up where Hitler and Haman left off.



Ilse Strauss,
News Bureau Chief

Dousing Iran's Ring of Fire

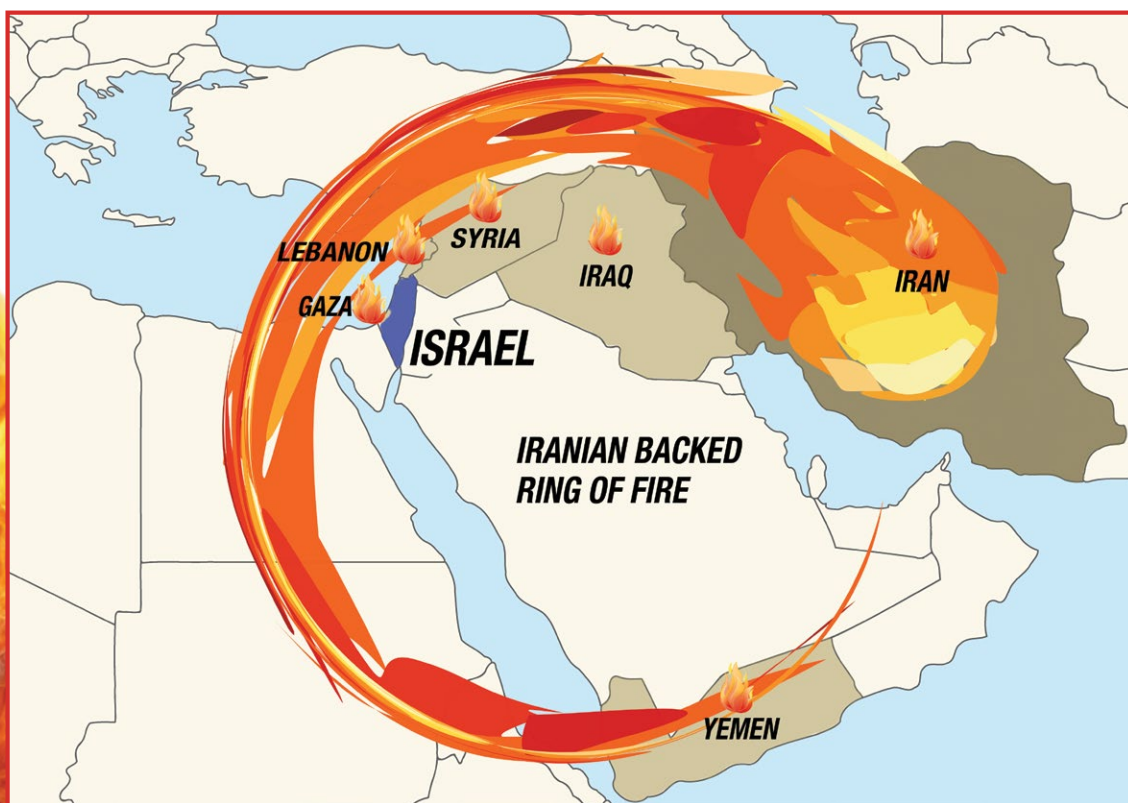
THIRTEEN YEARS AFTER THE OPENING SHOTS of the Syrian Civil War rang out on March 15, 2011, the devastating conflict came to an abrupt finale—against all odds and all in just over a week. Damascus fell to a coalition of rebels led by the Islamist militant group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) on December 8, 2024, ending Bashar al-Assad's 24-year rule and more than 50 years of Assad family dominance.

Few in Syria seemed to mourn the end of the Butcher of Damascus or his family's legacy. *Al Jazeera* all but fondly described Assad senior, Hafez, as "a sociopath in a well-tailored suit" who slaughtered Syrians by the thousands, crushing any seed of opposition before it could sprout into resistance. When Assad junior took the helm in 2000, hopes were initially high that he would do better. Yet Assad junior one-upped his father on mass incarceration, torture, extra-judicial killings and atrocities against his own people. History will remember him as the dictator who governed Syria as a totalitarian police state and repressed peaceful protests against his regime, ultimately sparking a civil war in which half a million people were killed

and six million became refugees. And then, when Assad saw the writing on the wall, he covertly fled to Moscow, leaving those who did his bidding to face the music.

I'm writing this article two weeks after HTS launched their lighting campaign to sweep like wildfire through the country, and one week after that same coalition marched almost unopposed into Damascus to receive a hero's welcome. As Syrians rejoice, HTS leader Abu Mohammed al-Golani has vowed to form a government "chosen by the people" to work toward establishing a stable and secure nation.

By the time you read this article, al-Golani is hopefully making good on his promises and Syria is emerging from the ruins of oppression and war. The Syrians certainly deserve that. Yet as the world wishes this war-weary nation the best, the *mullahs* in Iran are mourning Assad's fall, the end of the civil war and the prospect of a stable Syria. The reason for the sour grapes? Israel, of course.



Meet the Axis of Resistance

Qassam Suleimani had a dream. The commander-in-chief of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) envisioned a Middle East populated by Iranian terror armies and proxies—the so-called “Axis of Resistance”—positioned strategically along Israel’s borders to encircle the Jewish state in a ring of fire.

This ring of fire comprised Hezbollah in southern Lebanon; Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Gaza; Hamas in Judea and Samaria or the so-called West Bank; and the Iran-beholden Assad-regime in Syria. This core group had the support of distant components: the Houthis in Yemen; and Iran-backed militias in Iraq.

Make no mistake, it was a brilliant strategy. By birthing, training, nurturing, funding and arming its own regional terror armies to do its dirty work, Iran would steer conveniently clear of the front lines. And perhaps more importantly, tiny Israel would be so occupied keeping the heavily armed militias on its doorstep at bay, Iran wouldn’t register on Israel’s radar, leaving the former free to pursue its nuclear ambitions.

Then came the Syrian Civil War, which Iran viewed as a golden opportunity. Tehran dispatched tens of thousands of elite IRGC troops to support Assad. Then, two years into the war, when the rebels were closing in on the Butcher of Damascus, Iran upped its backing, supplying security and intelligence services, training, technical support and combat troops. Iran also sicced Hezbollah on the Syrians in order to ensure that Assad remained in power—and in the *mullah’s* back pocket.

When Suleimani died in a US-targeted missile strike on January 3, 2020, his dream of a ring of fire was already well established. And in his wake, Suleimani’s successors made every effort to add the additional fuel to stoke the fire that they believed would ultimately consume the Jewish state.

Perhaps everything would have gone according to plan had it not been for October 7, 2023.

The Day the Fire Burned Bright

Former head of Hamas in Gaza, Yahya Sinwar, proudly hailed Iran as its “largest backer financially and militarily.” Aerospace Force commander of Iran’s IRGC, Amir Ali Hajizadeh added, “All the missiles you might see in Gaza and Lebanon were created with Iran’s support.”

Having Iran in its corner emboldened Hamas. In fact, when thousands of Gazans smashed through the Israeli border on October 7, 2023, Hamas leadership fully believed that big

brother Iran—and certainly fellow Iranian terror proxy Hezbollah—would rush to its aid, like Tehran did for Assad. His assumption proved a fatal miscalculation—for his people and for Iran.

As the daze of smoke and shock hung over a battered Israel on October 8, 2023, it seemed—for a moment—as if Suleimani’s ring of fire had ignited to consume the Jewish state. This was the high-point for Iran and its Axis of Resistance. Top terror leaders publicly celebrated the slaughter, with Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei hailing the massacre as “a decisive blow to the Zionist regime,” putting Israel “on the path that will only end in its destruction. The Zionist regime is gradually melting before the eyes of the people of the world.”

Then Israel regrouped.

Quenching the Flames

Fourteen months later, Hamas, a critical puppet in Iran’s Axis of Resistance, lies in ruins, its infrastructure dismantled and leadership decimated. Fellow Axis of Resistance member Hezbollah, Iran’s other prominent proxy, has faced severe setbacks, with virtually its entire top command structure eliminated. Israel killed thousands of its fighters and destroyed most of its rockets. Iran felt the blows acutely. But then the third and final key member of the Axis of Resistance toppled. And as the Assad regime fell, it doused the final flame in Iran’s ring of fire around the Jewish state, undoing decades of effort, billions in investment, and countless lives lost.

Israel didn’t have a hand in the developments in Syria, but its crippling blows dismantling Iran’s Axis of Resistance and quenching the ring of fire have been undeniable—even to Iranians.

Iranian political commentator Bardia Garshasbi took to X to praise Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, offering a blunt assessment of what many in the Middle East and beyond have observed: “...in just 14 months, [he] has overturned a 45-year, multibillion-dollar scheme of madness and [extremist ideology]...”

Israel is not claiming victory just yet. Underestimating the *mullahs* could be a fatal mistake. A cornered Iran—bereft of its proxies but fueled by the goal of annihilating Israel and chasing its nuclear ambitions to do so—may pose an even greater threat. History shows that a cornered foe can be dangerously unpredictable



Ilse Strauss, News Bureau Chief

Destruction of Kfar Aza on October 7, 2023



ISRAELI CURE COULD COMBAT FATAL BREAST CANCER

FOR DECADES, scientists have sought the elusive “cure” for cancer, the devastating disease responsible for millions of deaths annually. Among its many variations, breast cancer is one of the deadliest. In 2022, the World Health Organization reported 2.3 million women diagnosed with breast cancer and 670,000 deaths globally. Traditional treatments, such as chemotherapy and radiation, aim to destroy tumors at the cellular level. However, a groundbreaking study led by Prof. Idit Shachar at Israel’s Weizmann Institute of Science has uncovered a novel approach to a potential cure.

Shachar’s researchers found that the key to a tumor’s survival lies in communication between its cancerous cells and nearby non-cancerous cells. Specifically, in certain types of breast cancer, the cancer cells “tell” surrounding immune cells to produce a protein, CD84 (SLAMF5). This protein creates a micro-bridge between immune cells, preventing them from attacking the tumor.

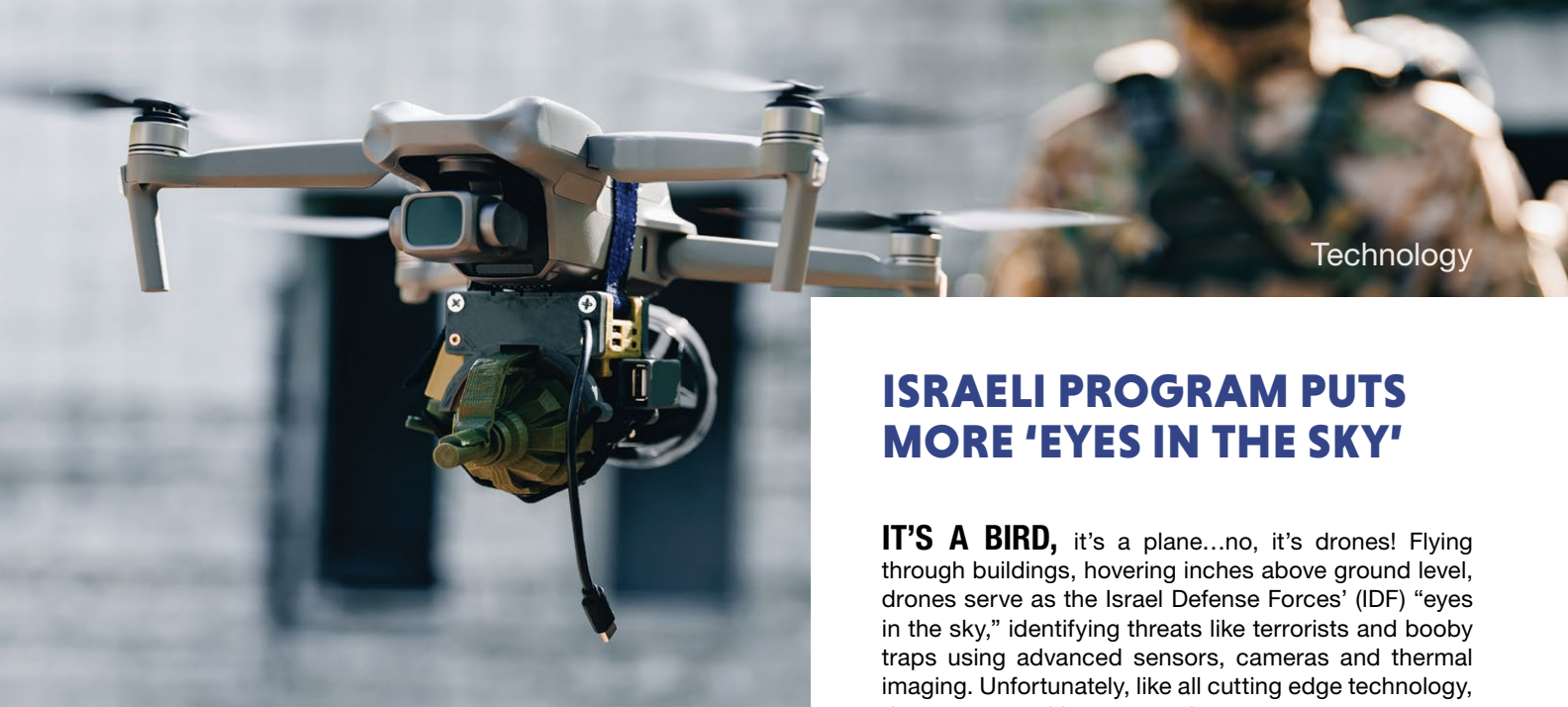
To counteract this, Shachar’s researchers developed an antibody that targets the CD84 protein, disrupting the

communication and slowing tumor growth. “Cancer cells don’t always display clear markers, which makes them hard to target,” Shachar said in an interview with *Ynetnews*. “That’s why we need treatments that disrupt the tumor’s supportive microenvironment, rather than just targeting the cancer cells themselves.”

Unlike traditional radiation therapy, the antibody would theoretically also avoid the severe side effects of fatigue and hair loss, thus offering patients a more targeted, less invasive treatment option.

This promising antibody is still in the early stages and has yet to be patented or released on a mass scale. But with breast cancer being the number one cancer found in women, according to the World Cancer Research Fund, the need for effective treatments is urgent.

Shachar’s team has recently entered into collaboration with the City of Hope Cancer Center in California and hopes to develop more therapies to bring the world closer to a final “cure” for breast cancer.



ISRAELI PROGRAM PUTS MORE 'EYES IN THE SKY'

IT'S A BIRD, it's a plane...no, it's drones! Flying through buildings, hovering inches above ground level, drones serve as the Israel Defense Forces' (IDF) "eyes in the sky," identifying threats like terrorists and booby traps using advanced sensors, cameras and thermal imaging. Unfortunately, like all cutting edge technology, drones come with a steep price tag.

In an attempt to save costs, the IDF's recent shift to cheaper drones imported from China has come with significant drawbacks. These drones often lack the specialized equipment needed for military operations, resulting in security risks and frequent malfunctions.

Jessica Zandani, an Israeli mother and kindergarten teacher, decided to flip the script. She told *JNS* she noticed in the early days of the war that "no one was really focusing on drones," despite their clear importance. Zandani also noted due to low quality the IDF normally loses, "20% to 30% of our drones each day. In war-times, a bad day can translate into a 50% to 60% loss."

Teaming up with business partner Shai Spetgang, Zandani founded STEM-Up Israel. Their initiative focuses on developing reliable, high-quality drones by tapping into Israel's pool of young talent. STEM-Up trains high school students and soldiers in drone assembly, repair and operation, creating a self-sustaining system that reduces the IDF's reliance on expensive imports.

The program has raised funds and partnered with nonprofit organizations to bring in volunteer engineers who mentor students, ensuring that Israel has their "eyes" ready for military and civil patrol (Kitat Konehut) use.

"The hope is to fully realize the lifesaving potential of these drones and create new technologies," Zandani says. With STEM-Up, Israel is not only enhancing its military capabilities but also fostering innovation that could save lives both on and off the battlefield.



Zoe McHenry,
BFP Writer

Environment

H2Oll TAKES ATMOSPHERIC WATER GENERATION TO THE NEXT LEVEL

WATER IS THE FOUNDATION of all life. Without it, our planet would be as lifeless and barren as Mars. Take Israel's Negev Desert, for example: With little water, there's little life. But what if you could make water from thin air? Well, in 2012, Israel did! Israeli startup Watergen introduced a generator that cools air until moisture condenses. While innovative, this process was expensive, limiting its potential.

This year, another Israeli startup, H2oll, took the same water-from-air technology to the next level, making it cheaper and adaptable to any climate. Yoav Kirsch, CEO of H2oll told *NoCamels* their technology is a "game changer" compared to Watergen's method.

Unlike Watergen, which cools the entire air mass, H2oll uses liquid desiccant technology, a concentrated salt solution that absorbs only the moisture molecules from the air (about 2% of the original mass). This method is not only more energy-efficient, but it also ensures the water produced is free from chemical and biological contaminants.

Already installed on rooftops in the Negev Bedouin community of Project Wadi Attir, each H2oll machine can produce 1,000 liters [264 gal.] of water per day, enough to supply 200 people. With plans to expand, H2oll aims to increase production to 10,000 liters [2,641 gal.] daily by developing solar-powered systems.

With over NIS 4 million [approximately US \$1 million] raised for further development, H2oll is poised to bring clean, sustainable water to regions suffering from water scarcity, offering a promising solution for millions worldwide. Their generators prove that life can thrive, even in the desert.

They Never Forgot Jerusalem



IN THE RUGGED, MOUNTAINOUS REGION spreading over parts of northern Iraq, southeastern Turkey, northwestern Iran and northern Syria lies Kurdistan, the home of an ancient Iranic people group. Dwelling among them in isolated communities were Jews who had lived there since the Assyrians brought them from the northern kingdom of Israel in the eighth century BC. Over the centuries, the Kurdish Jews retained the faith and traditions of their ancestors, and they never forgot their homeland. When the modern State of Israel was born, those prayers and longings were answered as the Kurdish Jews returned to the Land they had left over 2,500 years before.

Kurdistan



Kurdish Jews

Carried Away from Israel

How did these Jews end up in Kurdistan? The earliest written record occurs in Scripture where the biblical account tells us that Shalmaneser V “*carried Israel away to Assyria, and placed them in Halah and by the Habor, the River of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes*” (2 Kings 17:6). These landmarks are all located in northern Iraq among the Kurdish people.

Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela, who visited the region around 1170 AD, told of a vibrant Jewish presence consisting of over 100 communities where residents still spoke Aramaic. The Kurds themselves lived in highly organized tribal groups into which the Jews—with their different language, faith and customs—were not included. They did, however, fall under the protection of the regional tribal chief and performed the duties he required of them.

Unlike the Iraqi Jews who achieved positions of prominence in society, the neighboring Kurdish Jews led simple lives, limited to being farmers, weavers, tanners, dyers, woodchoppers, porters or boatmen. Walter Fischel, who visited the area in 1949, wrote, “I, too, was greatly moved by the sight of Jews, working under a burning sun, digging and hoeing in their vineyards and fields, and singing Jewish-Aramaic melodies during their work. Powerfully-built men, a Jonah, an Ezra, a Zachariah and others, greeted me with their ‘*shalom*’ and allowed me to investigate their old *geniza* (storage area for worn-out Hebrew-language books on religious topics) in the still well-preserved synagogue, built several centuries ago.”

Operation Ezra and Nehemiah

Although the Kurdish Jews did not experience the Spanish Inquisition or the antisemitic pogroms of Eastern Europe, life was not easy. And they were always a people set apart, longing to return to their homeland. Over the years, contact had been maintained through the visits of *sh'lichim* (emissaries) from Zion as well as through letters written from Jewish communities in Kurdistan to residents of Safed, Tiberias and Jerusalem. So, it should not be surprising that small numbers of the Kurdish Jews were among the first to make *aliyah* (immigrate to Israel) even as early as the late 1500s.

With the birth of the modern State of Israel and the corresponding animosity towards their Jewish populations in the surrounding Arab nations, the Kurdish Jews came home at last. Between 1951 and 1952, nearly the entire Jewish community of Kurdistan was airlifted to Israel, leaving only a few families who had decided to remain behind. Named Operation Ezra and Nehemiah, the airlift brought between 120,000 to 130,000 Kurdish and Iraqi Jews to Israel.

In an article for *Aish.com*, Dr. Yvette Alt Miller wrote: "Few of the Kurdish Jews had ever seen an airplane, let alone ride in one. The Kurds stepping off the Near East Transport planes in their hand-spun *jimidani* head coverings looked as dazed and disoriented as if a time-travel machine had just deposited them in a distant future."

As Israelis welcomed their brothers and sisters fleeing the lands of the Diaspora (Jewish population outside Israel), the limited resources of this tiny nation were nearly stretched to the breaking point. New *olim* (immigrants) were settled in *ma'abarot* (temporary transit camps) until more permanent housing could be built. Many of the Kurdish Jews were placed in a tent city at the foot of Castel hill near Jerusalem. They built homes and called the new neighborhood Maoz Zion (Stronghold of Zion), which retains the flavor of its Kurdish beginnings until today.

Today, there are approximately 200,000 Israelis who trace their roots to Kurdistan. About half live in Jerusalem, and they have also established 30 agricultural communities in the Land. They have contributed much to the building of the State of Israel—very literally, as many of the residents of Maoz Zion worked as stonecutters at the Solel Boneh quarry just outside Jerusalem. They were staunch Zionists during the days when they lived in exile and when they returned, that did not change. Loyal, always ready to lend a helping hand to another in need, if you have a Kurdish friend or neighbor, you will be blessed beyond measure.

Operation Ezra and Nehemiah



Kurdish Jews arriving at a *ma'abara* in Israel



A *ma'abara* in Kiryat Ono



Kubbeh Soup

"The Kurdish community was very poor and so was its cuisine," writes Renana Peres, a Hebrew University professor of Persian-Kurdish descent. One traditional dish is *kubbeh* soup, which comes in several different variations. The meat-filled dumpling is common to all, while the broth itself and perhaps the vegetables vary. *Hamousta* is lemony with a celery and chard broth, while *matfunia* adds pumpkin chunks to make a very hearty soup. Making the dumplings themselves is labor intensive, a process that can begin on Thursday afternoon in preparation for the *Shabbat* meal the next day. *Kubbeh* has grown in popularity, and today, it is possible to buy pre-made, frozen dumplings. However, these do not compare to those hand-made by a Kurdish housewife!

A Melting Pot

Today, the State of Israel is a melting pot of traditions and cultures that have been brought home from the Diaspora with the returning Jews. However, at the center of their being and the core of their identity, all are descendants of Abraham and are inextricably linked to the Land of Israel. These small cultural differences are simply an enrichment of God's chosen people who call this Land home.



Janet Aslin, *BFP* Writer



The Officers of the IDF

MY FIRST ENCOUNTER with an officer of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) was in 1985 at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, home of the US Army Field Artillery. Assigned there for the Officers Advanced Course, I was privileged to sponsor one of the allied nation officers in attendance: Captain Nir Granot from Tel Aviv.

My wife and I befriended Nir to help him feel at home for his six months in America. In theory, Nir would learn from my professional military training along with the rigorous program of study at the artillery school. In reality, Nir taught all of us from his combat experience as an artilleryman in the 1982 First Lebanon War. Only later did I understand that this is the norm in US-Israel relations: We supply the resources; they supply the experience.

Backbone of the IDF

From the rebirth of the modern State of Israel in 1948, the imbalance of power of the Arab nations over Israel prompted the need for frontline officers who could overcome their country's disadvantages through innovation, leadership and spiritual strength. Mostly untrained junior officers had to seize the qualitative edge to overcome their enemies' quantitative superiority. Immediate attention was given to developing a junior officer cadre as the backbone of the IDF.

The US military model under which I was trained relies on the enlisted, non-commissioned officers (NCO) to be the backbone, while the educated, commissioned officers serve as the brain. In contrast, the IDF calls on its junior officers to be both. In his three-year service obligation straight out of high school, the junior officer trains as a soldier, proves himself as an NCO, attends officer school and is, most likely, tempered by combat as a defender of Israel. When concluding mandatory service, he faces a major decision: Exit to the reserves and civilian life or continue in the active force as a professional officer.

Leading from the Front

In my officer training, I learned to keep some distance from the front line of action. The idea is to make the "point man" a lower ranking soldier who will become a casualty before you do. Admittedly callous and utilitarian, but in the hard reality of warfare, it makes sense to keep the officer alive longer so he can command his unit and direct its response to enemy action.

Not so in the IDF, which is committed to the principle of leading from the front. Have you noticed that when the IDF releases its daily death reports from fighting in Gaza, Lebanon, Judea and Samaria there is a disproportionate number of officers among the casualties? These are the junior officers who are the tip of the spear, the ones who charge first into the line of fire, and by their example, say to their men, "Follow me!"



New graduates of the IDF officer school at an induction ceremony in Jerusalem

The People's Army

Israel's first prime minister, David Ben Gurion, was also its first minister of defense. He fashioned a "peoples' army," not a professional one, as a melting pot and education system for the vast number of new immigrants the nation was absorbing. He envisioned the nascent state's fighting force to also be where diverse social classes met, thus creating national unity, raising the education level and strengthening Jewish values. A completely unique institution, Ben Gurion's vision has proven to be inspired.

But an institution is not brick and mortar—it is people. And who were the people who would accomplish the dual mission of security and society-building? Naturally, the junior officers. Since 1948, young men and women barely in their 20s have borne the brunt of critical security tasks while molding the populace into a unified citizenry, one citizen-soldier to another.

So Proud of their Officers

On an Israel battlefield tour I hosted, our tour guide, Charlie, a veteran of the First Lebanon War, announced that his son Shahar was training to be an officer. Israelis are tremendously proud of their officers. When we collected our loose change to tip Charlie, we asked that he let us share in honoring Shahar by taking him out to dinner. The proud papa was thrilled! Later, he wrote to say he had simply given all the money to Shahar. Though not our intent, we beheld a biblical teaching in practice, IDF-style.

Jesus (Yeshua) taught that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). How very Jewish of Him! The rabbis inculcated that truth so deeply that today it is a national cultural value. That's why Charlie didn't include himself in the gift but gave it all to his son. And what did Shahar do with the money? He answered that question in this amazing message: "I feel a sense of mission in what I do and my service in the IDF, so the

gift will enable me and my fellow officers to purchase equipment to be prepared. Thanks to you, I guess we're not alone."

Purchase equipment...? How much money did we give Charlie for that intended dinner? We'll never know because we never counted. But the outcome points to a multiplication miracle God accomplished to make sure this young IDF officer-in-training got the message from Christians that he and his soldiers do not stand alone in their sacrificial defense of beloved Israel.

Hard Enough, Soft Enough

I once attended a briefing from an IDF officer to a group of Bridges for Peace leaders on the impact of the Syrian civil war on Israel. He explained how thousands of Syrians were crossing the border to receive medical care in the Jewish state. When question time came, I had to ask, "Sir, the border is a hardened security barrier. How are wounded Syrians able to cross it?" In classic Israeli fashion, the commander responded, "Well, I can tell you this. That border is hard enough to repel a Syrian invasion but soft enough to let in a wounded Syrian."

And that, in a nutshell, is Israel. As exemplified by its young commanders, Israel has to be tough enough to repel an invasion while remaining compassionate enough to heal the hurting. Defenders of the nation, builders of the society, and keepers of the peace, the junior officer corps forms the backbone of the nation God has regathered—for the sake of His name and so the nations will know that He is the Lord (Ezek. 36:22–23).



Dr. Bill Adams,
BFP Writer

Check in on Your Jewish Friends

A FLIGHT FROM TEL AVIV LANDED IN DAGESTAN—a southeastern region of Russia bordering the Caspian Sea—on October 30, 2023, just weeks after Hamas’s devastating massacre on October 7. Videos of the incident show a mob from the Muslim-majority region, knowing a plane was arriving from Israel, storming through the airport, searching for anyone Jewish. Some 20 people, including police officers, were injured in the riot, the *BBC* reported, citing the republic’s health ministry.

US actress and activist Alyssa Milano posted a photo of the airport riot and wrote: “Check in on your Jewish friends. They are not okay. Tell them you see them. The rise in antisemitism must stop now. Hate is never the answer.”

Now, nearly a year and a half after the start of the Israel–Hamas war, Jewish people in Israel and around the world continue to experience the horrifying effects of skyrocketing antisemitism.

Record-breaking Hatred

Between October 7 and the end of 2023, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) recorded 5,204 incidents of antisemitism in the United States. That short time period accounted for more incidents of antisemitism than the entire previous year.

Since 1979, the ADL has published a yearly Audit of Antisemitic Incidents in the US. The 2023 audit showed the highest number on record since the organization began tracking, with 8,873 antisemitic incidents in 2023—a 140% spike from the previous year, and more than the previous three years combined.

The ADL has yet to release its annual audit for all of 2024, but a preliminary report in October 2024 showed more than 10,000 antisemitic incidents between October 7, 2023 to September 24, 2024—a 200% jump from the same period the previous year.

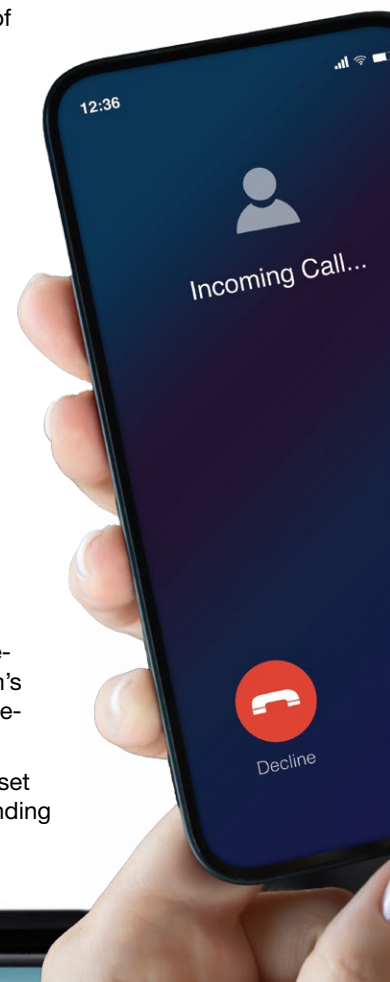
Of those 10,000 antisemitic incidents recorded, 8,015 were verbal or written harassment, 1,840 were vandalism and 150 physical assaults.

FBI Director Christopher Wray told Congress in a testimony after the Hamas attack on October 7: “The Jewish community is uniquely—uniquely—targeted by pretty much [every] terrorist organization across the spectrum.”

“And when you look at a group that makes up 2.4%, roughly, of the American population,” Wray said, as quoted by *CNN*, “it should be jarring to everyone that that same population accounts for something like 60% of all religious-based hate crimes.”

But the hatred and violence are not confined to the US. In Amsterdam in November, mobs of antisemitic gangs attacked Jewish fans after a football game between the Maccabi Tel Aviv football club and Amsterdam’s team. At least 10 people were injured in the attacks, described as a modern-day pogrom.

In December, two arsonists in Melbourne, Australia, set fire to a synagogue and wounded two people attending



prayers. Another synagogue in Toronto, Canada, was vandalized in December for the seventh time in almost as many months. In November, four teenagers from a school in London boarded a double-decker bus full of students from a nearby Jewish school and proceeded to swear at the Jewish children and scream slurs, including “F--- Israel.” They then got off the bus and began throwing rocks at it. The list goes on and on.

Solidarity

Though Milano issued the call to “check on your Jewish friends” more than a year ago, the words still hold true today. As antisemitism and hatred continue rising around the world, Jewish people in Israel and the Diaspora (Jewish population outside Israel) now more than ever need to know that they have the support of their non-Jewish friends.

Regardless of your feelings toward Israel and Zionism, check on your Jewish friends. A Jewish–American man told the *Harvard Business Review* in 2022 that at the time of the Pittsburgh synagogue massacre in 2018, his colleagues knew that he was Jewish but never acknowledged what happened or checked in with him.

He said he wished that his non-Jewish colleagues would have checked in with him after antisemitic incidents. “They could have sent me a note or a text, or talked to me before or after a meeting,” he told the *Harvard Business Review*. “Just to say: ‘I saw the news and I am horrified at what’s happening in the world. I wish I knew what to say. How are you doing right now? What can I do to help you at work?’”

Send a text, mention it in conversation, make a call, say something. As the world shouts more and more hatred of Israel and the Jewish people, let them know that they are not alone, that you see them, you care and you stand with them.

But what if you don’t know any Jewish people? Maggie Phillips, a non-Jewish writer for Jewish magazine *Tablet*, urged readers to find a local synagogue and reach out, voicing support through a voicemail, email or social media comment. Phillips also suggested voicing your support for the Jewish people online, noting that “for someone feeling like their hurt, pain, and confusion are being ignored or jeered at, scrolling and seeing a post standing by Jews and condemning the actions of Hamas, might well kindle the small flame of hope they’re struggling to keep alive.”

Don’t keep silent. Simi Lichtman wrote on the *Medium* platform that for those who have not checked in or spoken up for the Jewish people, their silence has not gone unnoticed. But it’s not too late to say something. “...your words will be noticed and appreciated,” Lichtman wrote. “It will help calm the nerves of so many who don’t know if we’re living in a safe world anymore. The longer we feel the silence of those around us, the more alone and afraid we feel.”

Lichtman added that as a Jew, she has “felt the importance of support from friends and colleagues who aren’t Jewish.”

“A text from someone I hadn’t spoken with in months brought tears to my eyes,” she wrote. “A message from a Catholic friend of mine that he was attending prayer services for Israel, or that the Pope was asking people to fast for Israel—these have been sustaining in the midst of horrors and atrocities being committed against my people.”

So, pick up your phone. Speak out. Check in. Your support matters to your Jewish friends.



Kate Norman, *BFP Writer*



Widows and Orphans

The Group No One Wants to Join

“A FATHER OF THE FATHERLESS, a defender of widows, is God in His holy habitation. God sets the solitary in families.” (Ps. 68:5–6a)

My mother was a widow for twelve years. I saw in my own family the sorrow a widow feels when she loses her spouse. I witnessed the loneliness and the ongoing pain as every holiday rolls around. Even though my mother wasn't destitute, she was emotionally wounded for the rest of her life because she had lost her husband.

When my mother passed away, Bridges for Peace set up a Widows and Orphans fund in her honor. We had no idea that October 7, 2023 would usher in a time when so many would become widows and orphans in so short a period of time. Our hearts were torn apart over and over again as we realized the pain these families were plunged into.

Chronicles of Sorrow

According to data from the Department of Families, Commemoration and Heritage at the Ministry of Defense, in the year between October 2023 and October 2024, there were 890 uniformed casualties, most of them men. They served in the army, the police force, Shin Bet (Israel's internal security) and were members of infiltrated communities' emergency squads. They fought in the south, in Lebanon, in Judea and Samaria. And they left behind “1,590 bereaved parents, 306 widows, 645 orphans and over 2,730 bereaved siblings.” Families changed forever.

Here are just three of these widows' stories.



Flowers for Shabbat

Lt. Ivri Dickstein was killed in Lebanon on a Thursday. Before he died, he had ordered flowers for his wife. What a thoughtful husband to make sure his wife has flowers for *Shabbat* (Sabbath) even though he was fighting in a war. He wrote a sweet note to accompany the flowers. Of course, he didn't know that was the last gift he would ever give his wife.



Hours after Lt. Dickstein's funeral, his wife received the delivery of flowers and a letter. All of Israel shed tears as they read the last words of a hero to his wife. "To my dear wife, I am writing to you again from the far north. I hope it is the last time. I am here, happy and proud to do something important for our nation. I ask you to continue to smile and be with your head up. I am doing okay, do not worry. I love you very much."



Orphaned at 10 Months

On October 7, 2023, Hadar and Itay Berdichesky hid their 10-month-old twin sons in the safe room hoping that the terrorists assaulting their home would overlook them. The parents were murdered, but their young sons survived.

These orphan boys were fortunate. Their aunt and uncle have taken them in and are raising them along with their own three young boys. Their aunt

had to quit her job and become a full-time mother to five boys under the age of seven. Now, the family is trying to manage on only one paycheck.

Presents from Heaven

Hadas Lowenstern's husband, Rabbi Elisha Lowenstern, 38, fell in battle, leaving behind Hadas and their six children, ranging in age from 11 months to 12 years. "He was the love of my life," Hadas said in a video that went viral. Because of the size of his family, Elisha was exempt from reserve duty, but both he and Hadas felt it was the right thing for him to serve his nation.



An article about Hadas and Elisha on Chabad.org tells another part of their story. "Her husband made it a tradition to buy her a gift for every *Rosh Chodesh* (new

Hebrew month). Last *Rosh Chodesh*, after her husband had already been killed, Hadas received an unexpected visit from a stranger who delivered a necklace to her. Hadas instantly knew that it was a gift from Elisha, sent straight from heaven. 'Who else sends his wife presents from Heaven?!' she exclaimed."

How does someone adjust to a loss so deep? Suddenly, these women who are in deep mourning themselves, must be single mothers to grieving children. They must maneuver the bureaucracy and take on the role of both parents in the home. Children will grow up without knowing their father. Some, like the Berdichesky twins, will have no memories of their parents at all. But they will survive because the community will help them.

The Group No One Wants to Join

Since the beginning of the war, the number of widows and orphans has spiked. Among these new widows are young women who haven't had children yet. Many of the women had only been married a month or two before the war started. According to the non-profit Israel Defense Forces Widows and Orphans Organization (IDFWO), "some of them didn't even have the time to change their status on their identity cards before their husbands were mobilized and killed. And now they will be listed as widows."

Tami Shelach, the head of IDFWO, added that more than 30 pregnant widows lost their husbands. These babies will never know their fathers, even though their mothers will try to keep their memories alive.

These new widows join others who have lost husbands in the many wars Israel has been forced to fight in defense of her citizens. According to the *Jerusalem Post*, the IDFWO currently provides assistance to more than 4,000 widows and 13,000 orphans.

For years, Bridges for Peace has worked with Rabbi Yehuda Glick and his wife. Their organization Amitsim reaches out to Israel's young widows, widowers and orphans. Rabbi Glick told us that the home rests on two legs, the mother and the father. When one leg is missing, the home falls apart. The surviving spouse needs the community to surround them. That is what Amitsim is committed to doing.

Even with the help of community, becoming a widow puts you in a group you never want to be eligible to join. No one wants to be a widow, but it is a reality from which you can never resign. Widowhood becomes part of your story from the moment you receive the news until you pass away.



Rebecca J. Brimmer,
International President

Fighting on the Front Lines of Freedom



EVERYONE SEEMS TO HAVE AN OPINION on why the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) wages war. In the midst of International Criminal Court arrest warrants, ceasefires and UN resolutions, it's easy to forget that at the heart of this complex conflict are the Israelis who serve as soldiers. These men and women, often depicted in the media through the lens of politics and military strategy, have their own personal stories, lives they've left behind, struggles and dreams. To truly understand what the IDF fights for, we must listen to their voices, the voices of those who fight not for power or dominance, but for survival, security and the hope for peace.

Below are the words of IDF soldiers, each reminding us of the true motivations of those who don the uniform. Hear the voice of the soldiers of Israel. Hear what they fight for.

"We believe that courage, loyalty and diversity, unified by the common goal of defense are essential to our mission...Our soldiers invest their time, withstand challenges, and often risk their lives to protect the State of Israel from its enemies and ensure the safety of the people they love. We are the Israel Defense Forces. Defense is our mission—security is our goal."

—IDF mission statement

"Israel is fighting on the front lines on behalf of the free world. If Israel is not allowed to win this war, Europe will be facing the same atrocities as we did on October 7."

—Col. (ret.) Grisha Yakubovich, 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.

"We are fighting for our families and homeland, knowing that no one else is coming to defend us. After the Holocaust we swore never again will we become victims as sheep to the slaughter by our enemies. We are the defenders that stand guard of our people and God's land."

—Sgt. Maj. (res.) Doron Keidar

"I never imagined I would have to write something like this in my life...I was told we'll be entering Gaza tomorrow, and there's a chance we won't be back...We have no other country, and now it is my turn to defend it and fight the battle of all the civilians, soldiers, babies, elderly and women who were helpless in the face of Hamas's brutality."

—Staff Sgt. A., 20, who fell in Gaza, wrote this letter before going into battle



"We just want to live."

"I believe Israel fights for many reasons. First and foremost, it fights to protect every person living in it, citizen or not, as well as ensure the protection of the Jewish homeland as a safe haven for all Jews around the world. Israel also fights to protect and keep alive the only democracy in the Middle East. Inadvertently, Israel is also fighting a greater battle: a war on global terror against the Iranian regime and the threats it brings to Israel, to the Middle East and to the world as a whole."

—Pvt. Shlomo Jaffe, 21, IDF soldier in the Psagot program, an elite IDF academic reserve program

"We enter Gaza with the mission to destroy the terrorist centers, disable their network, stop their infiltrations, take out their elaborate tunnel infrastructure and stop their ability to continue carrying out attacks on settlements in southern Israel... None of us wanted war, but when Israel was under attack, we were proud to be able to defend the country we love."

—Sgt. Jonathan, 24, in a letter written to his family in the US before he fell in battle. He is one of hundreds of Jewish young men and women from around the world who volunteer to serve in the IDF. They are known as lone soldiers.

"I feel the burden to fight for Israel's future and protect it from what I perceive is the greatest threat to the future of Zionism and to the right of a Jewish and democratic state to exist in the land—this conflict and the negative effects that it creates for Israel (deligitimization, lack of security, internal division and more). Fighting for the country includes fighting its enemies and protecting its security, but no less important is the battle for a peaceful future that will bring real security to future generations."

—Jason Silverman, 33, IDF combat reservist and director of Research and Policy at an Israeli peace organization called Economic Cooperation Foundation

"If you are reading this, the worst has probably happened...I consider it a great privilege to continue our ancestors' path in the Land of Israel: to fight for this land. It's said, 'Whoever saves a single life in Israel, it is as if he saved an entire world.' So I went to save and protect all the people of Israel and this land, which I love so much."

—Sgt. Nava Yair Assulin, 21, in a letter entitled 'The Day After Me,' written before he fell in battle

"We just want to live in our tiny speck of a country with the confidence that our families can grow up without the immediate threat of a terrorist stabbing us on the bus, rockets falling on our kids' schools or our loved ones getting kidnapped, murdered or raped. We didn't start this war, but we've been forced to fight until those who have killed us or who have publicly called for our nation's utter destruction are put at bay. We just want to live."

—Capt. Leah, 33

"We are writing the most significant moments in the history of our nation and the entire world...Look at your loved ones in their eyes and remind them that everything we go through in this life is worth it and we have something to live for."

—Rabbi Elkana Vizel, who fell in battle, in a letter to his wife and four children

"We will not stop fighting until the moment our mission is completed. We have suffered heavy losses, but the spirit of the commanders and fighters is high, with the understanding that on our shoulders lies the task of ensuring our children a safe and peaceful country to grow up in."

—Col. Elad Tzuri, 43



Zoë McHenry, BFP Writer



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Spiced Tu BiShvat Date Cake

Every holiday in Israel comes with its own special food customs. *Tu BiShvat*, or the New Year for Trees, is no different. Celebrated on the 15th day of the month of Shevat (usually in February), the holiday originated as a way to calculate the age of trees. Leviticus 19:23–25 prohibits eating fruit from trees during the first three years. In the fourth year, the fruit yield belongs to God. Only from the fifth year is the fruit for the enjoyment of the people. On *Tu BiShvat*, each tree in the land is considered to have aged one year, thus making it the new year for the fruits of the trees.

As with many other holidays here in Israel, *Tu BiShvat* is also an opportunity for joyous celebration. On the eve of the holiday, families and friends gather around dinner tables groaning with dishes made from the seven species: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates (Deut. 8:8). This spiced date cake is a firm favorite in Israel and the perfect dessert to complete a *Tu BiShvat* feast.

Ingredients

For the cake

- 1 c. dates, pitted
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 c. thick Greek yogurt
- 3 Tbs. date syrup (or honey)
- ¼ c. brown sugar
- ½ c. unsalted butter, melted
- 3 eggs
- Zest of one orange
- 1 c. self-raising flour
- 1.1 c. ground almonds
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 2 tsp. ground ginger
- ½ tsp. salt

For the topping

- 4 Tbs. date syrup (or honey)
- Juice of one orange
- 1 ½ c. thick Greek yogurt
- ¾ c. sour cream
- ¼ c. brown sugar
- ½ c. almond flakes, roasted
- Fresh figs or orange slices

Directions

For the cake

1. Preheat the oven to 320°F (160°C) and line a round 8.6-inch (22-cm.) cake tin with baking paper.
2. Place the dates and baking soda in a small saucepan. Add ½ cup boiling water, cover with a lid and allow to soften for 15 minutes.
3. Process the date mixture in a food processor until smooth.
4. Add the yogurt, sugar, date syrup, butter, eggs and orange zest. Process until well combined.
5. Transfer the mixture to a mixing bowl, then add the flour, ground almonds, spices and salt. Combine to a smooth batter.
6. Transfer the batter to the prepared baking tin and bake for 50 minutes. Allow the cake to cool in the baking tin for 10–15 minutes before removing it from the tin, transferring it to a wire rack and letting it cool completely.

For the topping

1. In a small saucepan, combine the date syrup and orange juice. Bring to the boil and allow to simmer for a few minutes, stirring throughout. Set aside to cool.
2. Whisk the yogurt, sour cream and sugar to soft peaks, and refrigerate until serving.
3. Once the cake is completely cooled, decorate with the yogurt mixture, fruit, roasted almonds and syrup. cream and the fruit on top or serve a slice of the cake on a plate and then decorate it with the sliced fruit, roasted almonds and syrup.

Serves 10–12

Arabs No Longer Buying the **LIES** of Hamas and Hezbollah

AFTER THE CEASEFIRE deal with Israel, supporters of the Iran-backed Lebanese terrorist group Hezbollah claimed “victory.” Many Arabs, however, say Hezbollah has lost hundreds of its members, including top leaders, and caused significant damage to Lebanese homes and the country’s economy, and have been mocking the terrorist group.

Hezbollah’s hasty declaration of “victory” is similar to that of Hamas, Iran’s Palestinian terrorist proxy in the Gaza Strip. Even now, Hamas continues to pretend it is winning the war. Commenting on Hamas’s claim, Egyptian political analyst Abdul Latif Al-Manawi wrote: “I was not surprised when [Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal] announced Hamas’s victory in the Gaza war. He said: ‘Our losses are tactical; our enemy’s losses are strategic and victory is coming.’ Is this how Mashaal sums up a whole year of devastation inflicted on the Palestinian people? Do the tactical losses he refers to include the war victims? Do they include more than 80,000 [Palestinians] injured? Do they include more than 90% of the Gaza Strip’s population displaced from their homes and neighborhoods razed to the ground? Victory, Khaled Mashaal, is not like this. Victory is realizing the extent of your power and using it at the right time and in the right way. Victory is not bringing back the era of illusory speeches and false victories.”

Hezbollah declared war on Israel the day after the October 7 atrocities. Hezbollah leaders said then they would stop only if Israel ended the war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip. They also said they would not withdraw their terrorists north of the Litani River in southern Lebanon.

The ceasefire agreement, reached on November 27, stipulates that Hezbollah will not carry out any offensive action against Israel, regardless of the situation in the Gaza Strip. The agreement also requires Hezbollah terrorists to withdraw to the north of the Litani River. Hezbollah, in other words, has agreed to disconnect itself from the war in the Gaza Strip and to withdraw from the border with Israel.

This reversal is precisely why many Arabs cannot understand Hezbollah’s claim of “victory,” especially in light of the elimination of most of the group’s top political and military leaders, including [Secretary-general] Hassan Nasrallah.

Prominent Lebanese journalist Nabil Bou Monsef scoffed at Hezbollah’s false victory and pointed out that the war the group brought on Lebanon has caused terrifying scenes of destruction. He accused Hezbollah of engaging in self-delusion, linking Lebanon to regional arenas (the Gaza Strip) and “throwing Lebanon into a catastrophic massacre.”

“Where is the victory?” Bou Monsef asked. “What defeat is more terrible than such losses? How can one claim victory in the face of a massacre that has destroyed all the logic of resistance? It’s not too late to ask Hezbollah to explain its unilateral



Hezbollah considers this victory?

and deadly decision to open the confrontation [with Israel] under Iran's cover."

Lebanese student Lina al-Bayati added: "Hezbollah: 'We achieved victory over the enemy.' The party was uprooted from its roots, not a single one of them remains. Where is the victory?"

Lebanese lawyer Omar El-Yafi echoed: "Where is the divine victory that these victors celebrate?"

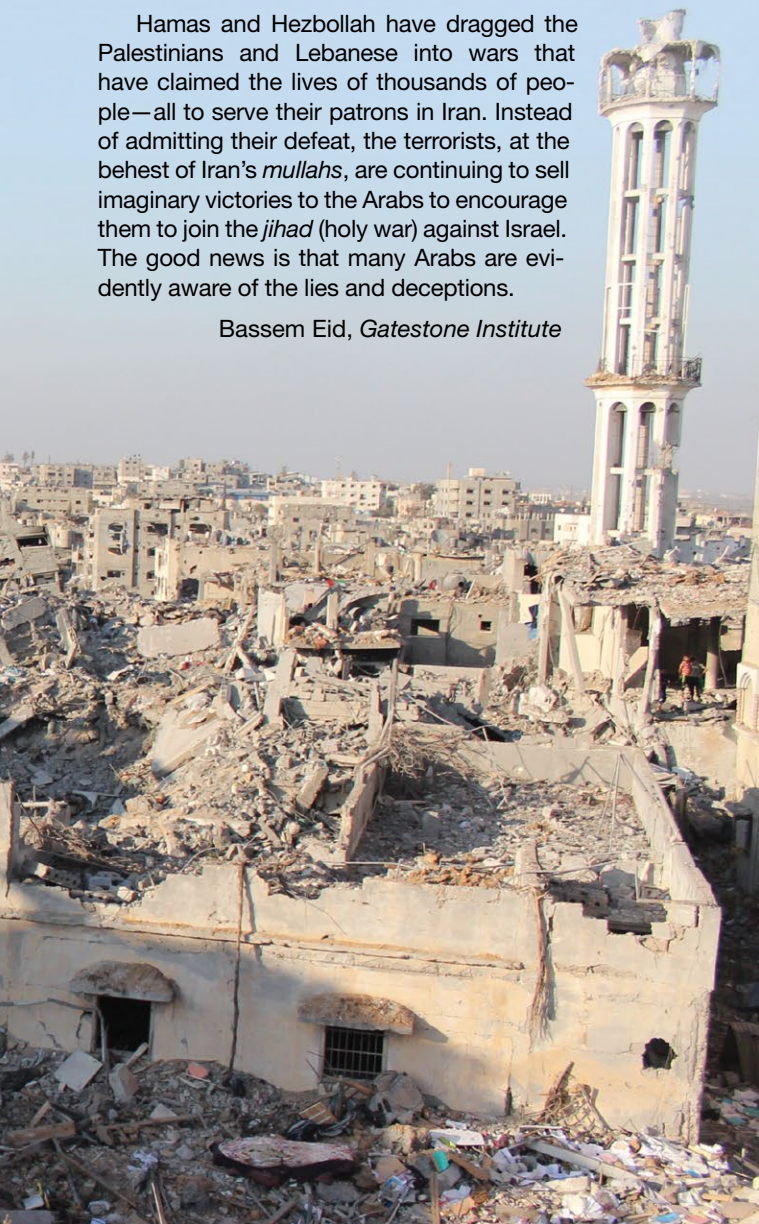
Egyptian political analyst Subhi Ibrahim argued: "The worst defeat for Hezbollah militias in the black history of destruction and thousands of deaths, and yet, with all impudence, some of its supporters raise banners and the victory sign! Where are you, you shameless folks?"

Social media user Abu Al-Ahrar summarized: "What kind of victory are you talking about? This is considered a defeat. Hezbollah rose up to support Gaza and said it will not stop until the siege on Gaza is lifted. How is this victory when Israel has eliminated all the leadership of Hezbollah? This is not called victory, but defeat."

Clearly, many Arabs are no longer fooled by the lies and propaganda of Iran's terror proxies in the Middle East.

Hamas and Hezbollah have dragged the Palestinians and Lebanese into wars that have claimed the lives of thousands of people—all to serve their patrons in Iran. Instead of admitting their defeat, the terrorists, at the behest of Iran's *mullahs*, are continuing to sell imaginary victories to the Arabs to encourage them to join the *jihad* (holy war) against Israel. The good news is that many Arabs are evidently aware of the lies and deceptions.

Bassem Eid, *Gatestone Institute*



Natural Allies: Iranians **Reject** Regime's Anti-Israel Policies

IN THE ANNALS OF HISTORY, few relationships are as paradoxical today as that between Iran and Israel. Once natural allies bound by a rich tapestry of shared history and mutual respect, the two countries now stand on opposing sides of a deep ideological chasm.

The Islamic Republic's hostility toward Israel is not only a departure from Iran's historical norms but also a strategic blunder that undermines Iran's national interests. Consequently, many Iranians view Israel as a potential ally in their quest to bring down the clerical regime and transform their nation.

Amid the wave of anti-Israel protests across the West since Hamas's terrorist attack on October 7, 2023, Iranians stood out as perhaps the only Middle Eastern diaspora to express solidarity with Israelis confronting rising antisemitism. Iranian activists in major cities throughout the US and Europe marched side by side with Jewish communities, demonstrating their support for Israel in its struggle against Tehran's terrorist proxies.

Many Iranians, particularly the youth, have voiced growing frustration with the Islamic Republic's ideology and foreign policy. Economic hardship, political repression, international isolation and Tehran's regional aggression drive dissent, as exemplified by slogans like "No to Gaza, no to Lebanon, my life for Iran" during the 2009 Green Movement and "Death to Palestine" in 2018. After the October massacre, soccer fans echoed similar anti-Palestinian chants in Tehran. These are not expressions of xenophobia but demands for a reorientation of national priorities.

Iran's third generation since the 1979 Islamic Revolution has firmly embraced a pro-Israel stance. In October 2023, this shift became evident when students, protesting school administrators who sought to force them into chanting "Death to Israel," defiantly reversed the slogan to "Death to Palestine." Similarly, students at Tehran University made a powerful symbolic stand when they refused to walk over a painted Israeli flag on the floor.

Various surveys conducted by both Iranian and international pollsters consistently show that most Iranians oppose the Islamic Republic's antisemitic and anti-Western foreign policy. Considering the regime's tight control and the population's fear of reprisals, polling in Iran may be unreliable, yet these findings have remained remarkably consistent over time.

Saeed Ghasseminejad, Janatan Sayeh, *Ynetnews*

Azadi stadium in Tehran where soccer fans echoed anti-Palestinian chants



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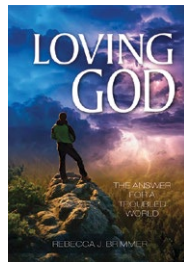
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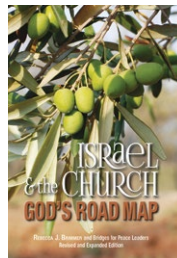


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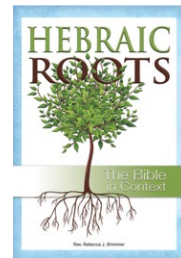
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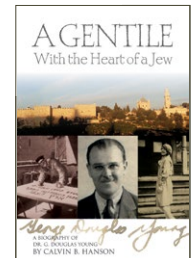
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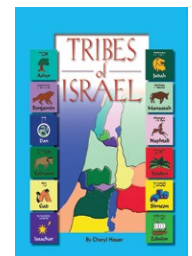
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