

dispatch from Jerusalem

A Publication of Bridges for Peace

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Echoes of the Past

Recognizing the Signs of Rising Hatred

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.

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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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How do you negotiate with the evil that is Hamas? The world's current viewpoint is like ordering a patient with pneumonia to compromise with the infection rather than treat it with antibiotics. Yet science acknowledges a fundamental truth. Unless stopped, evil—like infection—will forcibly consume every vestige of life.

By Ilse Strauss

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"*Allahu akbar!*" (Allah is greater!) is a call to prayer but also the rallying cry of radical Islamists against those deemed infidels or apostates—any non-Muslim. The drive to decimate the Jewish state is not about land, borders or political control but about dominance between the god of Islam and the God of Abraham

By Ilse Strauss and Kate Norman

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During two somber days this month, Israel honors lives lost in the Holocaust, fallen soldiers and victims of terror attacks before celebrating the rebirth of the State of Israel. On these memorials, Israelis remember the price of being stateless and the price paid to keep their state. They recall why they fight.

By Kate Norman

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"I have seen everything that's happening now. I have lived through these times before." Holocaust survivor Walter Bingham shares how his experience as a boy in Hitler's Germany mirrors the rise of antisemitism and the violent hatred toward the Jewish people and the State of Israel taking place around the globe today

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The nation of Israel originated with God's call to Abraham, approximately 4,000 years ago, but Israel as a state, or an organized political entity, happened 1,000 years later under King David. But how did a nation, scattered around the world for 2,000 years, once again become a state?

By Dr. Bill Adams

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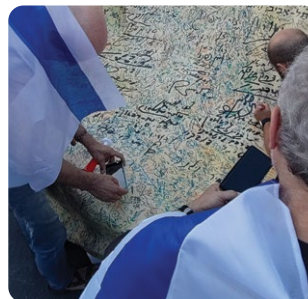
Israel is known as a startup nation and a powerhouse of technological and military ingenuity. In recent years, a quieter yet equally revolutionary transformation has been taking place: the rise of women to leadership roles in fields critical to Israel's security and innovation.

By Kate Norman

24 The Little Bakery on Prophets Street

Tucked between Moshe's falafel stand and Eli's *makolet* (small grocery store) on Prophets Street is a little bakery. Each Friday morning without fail, I make my way there to buy a loaf of *challah* from Ronnie for our Shabbat dinner. It is one of the special moments of my week. Join me for a visit to this unique spot.

By Janet Aslin



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From French to Hebrew



Returning Home

MARCH 19, 2012 IS A DAY the Jewish community of France will never forget. Mohammad Merah, a terrorist with ties to Al-Qaeda, maneuvered through the streets of Toulouse on his motorcycle and parked near the entrance of the Ozar Hatorah Jewish day school. He drew his gun and approached the school with a clear mission: to murder Jews.

Tragically, Merah succeeded. When his bloody work was done, he had murdered a rabbi and three children, while wounding several others. Witnesses shared that he executed 8-year-old Myriam Monsonogo at point-blank range by placing his weapon at her temple and pulling the trigger.

Merah was killed ten days later following a police siege and standoff.

A tremor of agony, shock and fear rippled throughout the Jewish communities in France and across the world. The evil nature of these horrific murders in broad daylight unsettled anyone with a conscience. Most of all, it clearly sent a message to French Jews that they were vulnerable and exposed. Some

tried to push the uncomfortable feelings from their minds, believing that it was just an “isolated incident” amidst France’s 68 million citizens against a proud French Jewish community that stretched back centuries. Yet, many wondered if the signs of violence targeting Jews, such as the murders in Toulouse and other attacks, as well as the nationwide rise in antisemitism, might be clearly spelling the end of French Jewry.

Truthfully, we cannot know if and when the life of the Jewish communities in France will end as a result of threats and the menacing rise of antisemitism. As Christians, our prayers have been with this vulnerable Jewish minority for years. We join the many voices calling for the government of France and all powers of law and justice in that nation to crush the cancer that is Jew hatred. But that hatred, wrapped in ideology of anti-Zionism and anti-Israel rhetoric which drips with the venom of antisemitism, presents a very real danger to the Jewish community. This danger continues to rise exponentially, particularly since the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, 2023. During a recent visit to Paris, I personally witnessed the torn down hostage posters and scrawled swastikas. The statistics and figures

reveal a reality of fear as thousands of France's Jewish citizenry consider fleeing their country of birth to make *aliyah* (immigration) to Israel.

Bridges for Peace has been a long-standing partner with Keren Hayesod, an umbrella organization of the Jewish Agency which focuses on official *aliyah* for the State of Israel. Our friend, Shmulik, recently told us that over 33,000 Jews made *aliyah* in 2024—despite the war—and that forecasts for 2025 show that this number could double. Moreover, France is expected to be a major *aliyah* nation.

As people of faith, the explanation is simple. God is calling His people back to their ancestral homeland, and the tragic growth of antisemitism among the nations is one of those things precipitating their return.

As the prophet Jeremiah stated amidst the approaching Babylonian threat against Jerusalem, *"Therefore behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "when it will no longer be said, "As the LORD lives who brought up the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt," but, "As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of the north and from all the countries where He had banished them." For I will restore them to their own land which I gave to their fathers. Behold, I am going to send for many fishermen,' declares the LORD, 'and they will fish for them; and afterwards I will send for many hunters, and they will hunt them from every mountain and every hill and from the clefts of the rocks'"* (Jer. 16:14–16 NASB).

God is faithful and He has promised to regather His people to the Land of promise for His Name's sake (see Isa. 11:12; Ezek. 36). Jeremiah 16:16 teaches that at certain points in history, it will be easier for the Jewish people to return and people will assist and encourage them ("fishers," such as Bridges for Peace). But there will also be times of threats and danger ("hunters," such as pro-Hamas advocates around the world), which will force many to flee to Israel. However, the prophet makes it clear that in all cases, it is the Lord who will regather them.

We are witnessing this in our day! We are seeing the jubilation in Israel as they welcome each new planeload of *olim* (immigrants). At the same time, we are witnessing the unsettled fears grow among the Jewish community in the nations. For decades, Bridges for Peace has been committed to rescuing Jewish people and returning them to the Land. In total, we have brought over 114,000 Jewish people to Israeli shores!

Faithful, dedicated Christians all over the world who love Jesus and His earthly family have made this possible as they



have donated their time and money to save and preserve lives and help Jewish people flourish in Israel.

Now we have some exciting news! This coming summer, Bridges for Peace will partner with Keren Hayesod to sponsor an entire planeload of French Jews who will make *aliyah* through our program, Project Rescue. A delegation from Bridges for Peace will travel to France, document the activity on the ground and meet with French Jewish leaders and individuals preparing for the massive life change. Then we will board the aircraft and fly home with them to the sound of the chorus, AM YISRAEL CHAI (the people of Israel live)! We will witness the welcoming celebrations on the tarmac of Ben Gurion Airport as the returning *olim* step off the plane and kiss the ground. We will see prophecy unfolding before our eyes—and we'll literally be a part of it. We will also share every step of this divine journey with you and all our supporters around the world so that every nation will know one undeniable fact: the God of Israel lives.

Will you join with us today in this exciting, prophetic adventure by supporting **Project Rescue**? Will you help fulfill the words God gave to Jeremiah right before our eyes!

With joy and shalom,
Rev. Peter Fast
International CEO



Scan to watch





The **BIBAS BOYS** and the **LIE** of Moral Equivalence

THEY WERE THRUST into the spotlight overnight—for the most heartbreaking reason imaginable. Before October 7, 2023, few knew the names Shiri, Ariel and Kfir Bibas. After that dark day, few will forget.

Hamas captured some of the last images of Shiri and her two little boys. They show Shiri, 32, her face a mask of terror, frantically clutching 4-year-old Ariel and 9-month-old Kfir, as if holding them close could somehow shield them from the unfolding nightmare. The boys' fiery red curls peek from beneath the white blanket Shiri wrapped around them in one final, futile act of protection.

Their father, Yarden (34) was captured and dragged to Gaza separately, while Shiri and the two boys—named to embody strength and courage (Ariel means “Lion of God,” while Kfir means “Lion Cub”), were marched by a baying mob of masked terrorists through the destruction of Kibbutz Nir Oz to a deadly fate in Gaza.

The images captured hearts around the world, and turned Shiri, Ariel and Kfir into the symbols of innocent hostages, clutched in the face of unimaginable evil.

For more than 500 days, Israel waited. Hoped. Prayed. Kfir's first birthday and Ariel's fifth came and went in captivity. Throughout the war, Hamas claimed that Shiri and her sons had been killed in Israeli airstrikes. Yet Hamas are masters of psychological warfare, known for their cruel manipulations. They had lied about the fate of hostages before, even staging deaths on film, as they did with Daniella Gilboa. And so Israel hoped...



Shiri, Ariel and Kfir Bibas

Throughout the first stage of the hostage release agreement, that hope began to fray. Every week, a group of Israelis were released—until Yarden himself came home. But Shiri, Ariel and Kfir remained missing.

Then, in late February, Hamas announced that the bodies of Oded Lifshitz (85) and the Bibas family would be handed over to Israel—all supposedly killed in Israeli airstrikes.

A Macabre Spectacle

Hamas has turned every hostage release into a grotesque performance. Yet these twisted rituals reached a horrific climax for the handover of the remains. Israelis called it “the saddest day since October 7.” For Hamas, it was a fun affair for the whole family.



The Bibas family's home in Kibbutz Nir Oz

Thousands of Gazans gathered to witness the grim display. Men lounged in plastic chairs, mothers cradled babies while children packed the bleachers erected the day before. Large loudspeakers blasted lively music, adding to the festive atmosphere as the crowd clapped and cheered.

Masked terrorists strutted proudly, posing for pictures with children, alongside a table on which an automatic weapon, ammunition, and anti-tank mines were on display for the future generation of Gazans to marvel. On stage loomed a mural crudely depicting Israel's prime minister as a blood-sucking vampire, with a message in Hebrew, Arabic and English: These hostages died in Israeli air strikes, we bear no responsibility for their demise, Israel's fault, not ours.

And between the crowd and the stage, four black coffins, each with a name, photo and inscription: "Date of arrest: October 7, 2023."

Later, Israeli journalist Rachel O'Donoghue wrote: "It wasn't just the presence of the four coffins that made the spectacle an echo of the savagery of October 7. It was the festive atmosphere—the casual, almost celebratory way a community gathered to watch a terrorist group display the bodies of murdered Jews. A society so desensitized to terrorist violence that even the sight of coffins holding two dead babies did not shock. Did not horrify. Quite the opposite. It was a cause for celebration. The mothers and fathers of Gaza brought their children to watch. To gawk. To clap. At the sight of dead Jews."

Hamas wasn't done with the psychological torture. The group handed over the coffins—locked—and then provided the wrong keys. Then, in a supposed accident, they sent back the wrong body, returning the remains of a Palestinian woman instead of Shiri.

A day later, the truth emerged. Hamas had lied—again. Shiri, Ariel and Kfir had not died in airstrikes. Rather, they had been strangled shortly after being taken hostage. Then Hamas mutilated their bodies to mimic the injuries of a missile strike.

Moral Equivalence?

Many condemned Hamas outright. Yet the predictable anti-Israel rhetoric came quickly: "How are the Bibas brothers different from the Palestinian children who died in Gaza? Why condemn Hamas without mentioning the children who died in Israeli airstrikes?"

**"Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness,"
Isaiah. 5:20a**

The argument is morally misplaced. Every innocent civilian death in war is tragic. But Proverbs 29:2 warns: "*When the wicked rules, the people groan.*" And when an evil leader drags his people into war by attacking his neighbor and then uses his own civilians as human shields, the suffering of the evil leader's people is his fault, not his neighbor's.

The argument that Hamas rebelled against Israeli oppression is equally skewed. In 2005, Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip in a "land-for-peace" effort, a type of test run that would potentially lead to the creation of the one thing the Palestinians claimed they wanted in exchange for peace with the Israelis: a state of their own. The international community poured billions into prospering Gaza, and with open borders to Israel and Egypt, Hamas had every opportunity to turn the area into a paradise.

Instead, Hamas pocketed the billions, built a war machine, fired rockets at Israeli civilians, dug terror tunnels, incited uprisings in the Sinai Peninsula and turned Gaza into a fortress of destruction. The result? Both Israel and Egypt imposed partial blockades to limit access to materials used by Hamas for war—with the restrictions on the Egyptian side even tighter than on Israel's.

Neither the Bibas boys nor the Gazan children deserved suffering. But the difference is clear: Hamas kidnapped Ariel and Kfir to serve as human shields, just as they use their own civilians as shields. Hamas held them hostage to prevent Israel from responding to the worst massacre of Jews since the Holocaust. The Bibas brothers were in Gaza because Hamas wanted to exterminate Jews without suffering the consequences.

Lebanese-Canadian professor Gad Saad put it best: "A non-targeted baby that dies in an airstrike is a tragedy. A baby that dies at the hands of his captors by being beaten to death is a violation of human decency. Both babies died, both are innocent, both deaths are tragic, but there is zero moral equivalence between the two realities."

"*Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness,*" the prophet Isaiah warned (5:20a).

The story of the Bibas family is not just a tragedy—it is a moral reckoning. It forces the world to confront an uncomfortable truth: there can be no equivalence between those who seek peace and those who glorify terror.

History will remember who stood for truth—and who enabled a lie.



Ilse Strauss,
International Education Director

The

Flame

that Refused to Be Extinguished

THE YEAR IS AD 135...

Jerusalem lies under the iron grip of the infamous Roman Emperor Hadrian. As the age-old Bible stories recount, the Romans ruled the Promised Land with ruthless cruelty, seeking to extinguish the Jewish light from their Empire. Yet a remarkable archaeological discovery has proven that Jewish faith endured despite the oppression.

At an excavation site near the Mount of Olives, archaeologists unearthed a perfectly preserved clay lamp, adorned with sacred Jewish symbols: the Temple *menorah* (seven-branched candelabra), an incense shovel and a *lulav* (date palm branch used at *Sukkot*, the Feast of Booths). The small piece of sculpted clay stands as powerful proof that from among the long list of oppressors who sought to erase Jewish identity, Hadrian, too, failed.

The Discovery

Discovered by the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA), the ancient oil lamp captured the attention of historians, archaeologists and the public alike. Benjamin Storchan, a research archaeologist with the IAA, emphasized the lamp's rarity not only for its perfect condition but for its engraved *menorah* decoration.

"The Temple *menorah* became a Jewish symbol during the Second Temple period," he explained. The *menorah* stood in the Holy Place of the Temple, its seven branches alight as a symbol of God's presence. Though the Romans destroyed the Temple in AD 70, the *menorah* has persisted in Jewish memory, becoming "an enduring icon in the Jewish collective memory, both within Israel and in the *Diaspora* [the Jewish population outside Israel]."

Storchan further elaborated on the craftsmanship: "It is evident that the lamp maker dedicated a great deal of time and effort to its decoration. The lamp was made using delicately and intricately carved limestone molds shaped with drills and chisels. The molds, crafted in two parts—upper and

Clay lamp found at the excavation site near the Mount of Olives



lower—allowed the potter to press clay into the forms, combine them and then fire the vessel. This method enabled the creation of refined designs and intricate decorations."

The lamp's style belongs to the "Beit Nattif" type, named after a production workshop near Beit Shemesh, 18 miles (30 km.) west of Jerusalem, identified in the 1930s. While these lamps were commonly used in everyday life, the inclusion of sacred Jewish symbols points to the Jews of Jerusalem acting to preserve their identity—defiantly.

The Bar Kokhba Revolt: Proof of Persistence

The lamp's "defiance" dates back to the tyrannical rule of Hadrian and the Jewish Bar Kokhba revolt (AD 132–135).

Jerusalem's identity in that day was not Jewish. It was a city filled with a pagan hubbub and renamed Aelia Capitolina. In addition to the many shrines to their plethora of gods and goddesses already present, the ruling Romans had erected a massive temple to Jupiter Capitolinus on top of the ruins of the Second Temple. To make matters worse, according to British historian E. Mary Smallwood, Hadrian reportedly called for a prohibition on circumcision, a key Jewish rite.

Enraged, the Jewish people, led by Simon Bar Kokhba, rose up in rebellion in AD 132. From their hideouts in the Judean hills, the northern Negev and the desert, the rebels waged war against the Romans. Bar Kokhba's tactics were effective enough to call for Roman reinforcements, and at least 10 legions were sent to Judea to crush the revolt.

The rebellion eventually ended in tragedy when the Jews lost their final stronghold at Betar. According to Britannica.com, over 580,000 Jews died in the conflict, not including those who perished from hunger and disease. After the revolt, the Roman legions went on to eliminate the remaining Jewish villages to prevent any further uprisings. And thus, Judea's transition from a client kingdom of Rome to a province ruled directly by Rome was sealed.

In further punishment, Hadrian sought to eradicate Jewish identity. The practice and teachings of Judaism were banned, and synagogues were destroyed and replaced with more Roman temples and shrines. The remnant of Jews from Jerusalem were sold into slavery or exiled from the city. And for the rest of Hadrian's reign, the light of the Jewish faith seemed to fade.

Yet despite the relentless slaughter and oppression, there must have been some Jews who remained in order to craft this lamp. "This finding is particularly surprising, since, we have very little evidence of the existence of a Jewish settlement in and around Jerusalem from this period (third to fifth centuries AD)," Michael Chernin, excavation director on behalf of the IAA, explained.

Regardless, someone had to make the lamp, and someone most definitely lit it in Roman-ruled Jerusalem.

A Light Burning for Centuries

Sadly, this story is not unique to Hadrian's time. Long before the Roman emperor sought to crush Jewish identity, a

similar villain ruled: the Syrian king Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–64 BC). Antiochus, too, banned the practice of Judaism, desecrated the Second Temple and forced Jews to worship Greek gods. Like the Jews of the Bar Kokhba revolt, a small group known as the Maccabees rose against him, waging a guerrilla war. Instead of the defeat of AD 132, this time they won, reclaiming Jerusalem.

Their first act of victory was to rededicate the Temple and relight the extinguished *menorah* (the symbol etched on the clay lamp unearthed near Jerusalem), which God had ordained to burn perpetually. With only enough oil for one day, the *menorah* burned for eight days—just enough time to produce another batch of oil. This miraculous triumph has been commemorated for generations on *Hanukkah* (Feast of Dedication).

In honor of *Hanukkah*, the Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein National Campus for Archaeology put the ancient clay lamp on public display during the holiday, recalling a history of Jewish resistance against persecution.

The Flame that Endures

Though empires have risen and fallen, and centuries of oppression have sought to dim the flame, the light of Israel has never been extinguished. From the valor of the Maccabees who rekindled the *menorah*'s flame to the courageous Jews who, under Hadrian's tyranny, preserved their identity, the story of resilience continues. Today, in the modern State of Israel, the flame burns brighter than ever. This ancient clay lamp is proof! No force—whether ancient or modern—can snuff out the light of the Jewish people.



Zoë McHenry, *BFP Writer*

Limestone molds used to shape the decorative lamp





The aftermath of a Hamas rocket attack in Holon

NEGOTIATING WITH EVIL

MY FRIEND RECENTLY underwent a root canal. “Aren’t we lucky our dentists believe in the laws of nature instead of the overly tolerant liberalism of the left,” he joked before the procedure.

Ah, yes. Imagine a world where healthcare professionals championed the rights of diseases, germs, infection and necrosis to coexist with healthy tissue.

Forget about eradicating the infection with antibiotics. Instead, patients with pneumonia would be ordered to compromise and dispatched to the negotiation table to forge a mutually agreeable treaty with the malady. Patients suffering from *necrotizing fasciitis* would automatically be accused of antagonizing and oppressing the flesh-eating disease, which obviously prompted the bacteria to launch a perfectly reasonable assault on the healthy tissue. My friend with the toothache would receive a stern lecture on the injustice of demanding the germs vacate their spot—and shamed for even suggesting the misunderstood organisms might encroach on viable enamel. And any healthcare professional who dares take a stand against the onslaught of disease on the human body would face mass public outcry, riots in the streets and international legal action.

Absurd? Perhaps. Yet when it comes to conflicts between Israel and her enemies, this is the logic many endorse.

CEASEFIRE NOW!

Wars end in one of three ways: a decisive victory with an unconditional surrender; a negotiated ceasefire leading to a more permanent peace achieved through yet more negotiations; and an inconclusive outcome, where opposing sides grow weary of warring and the fighting subsides into a frozen conflict.

The opening shots of the Israel–Hamas war had barely been fired when the international audience decided how the conflict would end. To be sure, world leaders initially expressed their sympathies and horror at Hamas’s cruelty, but before long, everyone from the pope to the secretary-general of the UN called for a ceasefire—and zoomed in on Israel as the party responsible to make that happen.

The assumption? If Israel compromised and ceased firing, the war would end immediately and peace would follow.

A ceasefire serves as a temporary pause in hostilities aimed at buying time to allow diplomacy to run its course and ultimately achieve a lasting truce. In theory, while the two fighting factions refrain from hostilities, both would focus on identifying areas of compromise to meet the other halfway, after which they would sit down at the negotiation table to hammer out a mutually beneficial treaty that would see the former foes live in neighborly harmony.

A worthy solution, no doubt. Every halfway decent human being desires the end of a devastating conflict and its suffering.

But what if one side comes to the ceasefire negotiations as a deadly infection protesting the injustice of the onslaught unleashed against it? Suppose one side arrives at the table as a flesh-eating disease demanding the healthy tissue yield another inch to the encroaching decay?

WHERE'S THE LOGIC?

A ceasefire between Israel and Hamas was never the only viable option to end this round of fighting. In fact, the proposed solution is akin to Albert Einstein's definition of insanity that mocks doing the same thing over and over, expecting different results.

A ceasefire was in place on October 6, 2023. Hamas violated it. What's the sense in returning to a status quo only one party upholds?

The Jewish state had compromised for an end to the hostilities long before October 7. Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005, uprooting its people and handing the Strip to the Palestinians to build the state they said they wanted.

Hamas had options—good ones. Billions of dollars, endless opportunities and no blockade to blame. Gaza could have been paradise. Instead, Hamas imprisoned its people in a deathtrap—and then launched a war on Israel.

Even then, ending the hostilities wasn't complicated. Israel's terms were clear: firing would cease when the hostages were home and when Hamas—who took perverse pleasure in documenting themselves committing some of the most heinous atrocities in modern history—was dismantled.

Yet the terror group's terms were clear too.



Pro-Hamas rally

EVIL IS AS EVIL DOES

Hamas sprang from the extremist cradle of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and takes its fanatic marching orders from the latter's core text, *Our War Against the Jews* (not Zionists or Israelis but Jews). Muslim Brotherhood leaders infamously rallied Muslims to complete Hitler's unfinished work, a clarion call that Hamas media communicates as a crusade to slaughter Jews and Christians alike.

The original Hamas Charter, the group's *raison d'être*, highlights the destruction of Israel—not a two-state solution or freedom for Palestinians—as one of its main purposes and calls for *jihād* (holy war) to “raise the

banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine.” The terror organization did release a more politically correct charter in 2017, but simply swapped the word “Jew” for “Zionist.”

Hamas leaders have publicly confessed to “yearn for death like our enemies yearn for life” and admitted that “when we talk about ‘peaceful resistance,’ we are deceiving the public.” They’ve begged Allah to count the Jews (not the Zionists or Israelis) and their supporters one by one for their eradication, vowed to repeat the atrocities of October 7 “time and again until Israel is annihilated”—happily “sacrificing martyrs” (Gazan civilians) in the process—and described its “doctrine in fighting you, the Jews,” as one of “total extermination. We will not leave a single one of you alive.”

Hamas's terms beg the question: How do you negotiate with that? What would a compromise look like? Would meeting the other halfway entail only half of Israel exterminated? Partial annihilation? Sparing a percentage of Jews instead of not leaving a single one alive? Only a few more October 7-style attacks instead of carrying them out time and again?



The site of the Nova Festival massacre

A COLD DOSE OF REALITY

Western society mistakenly believes that peace—achieved through compromise, of course—is the natural state of affairs. Yet, as British author and political analyst Douglas Murray pointed out recently, history teaches otherwise. Wars end because one side wins and the other side loses. And according to Murray, the perpetual cycle of conflict in this region persists because Israel is never permitted to achieve a decisive victory, while Hamas is continually allowed to reach a stalemate.

“If Hamas comes out of this with a fighting capability,” he warned, “there'll be another war in a couple of years.”

Ah, yes. Aren't we lucky that healthcare professionals believe in the laws of nature instead of the naive liberalism of the left? Science acknowledges a fundamental truth. Unless stopped, infection, decay and necrosis—like evil—will forcibly violate boundaries to encroach on healthy tissue, to assault living cells until it has consumed every vestige of life.

Such is the nature of evil.



Ilse Strauss,
International Education Director

The Battle of the Gods



“ALLAHU AKBAR!”

These are often the first words to pierce the subconscious minds of many Jerusalemites in the predawn darkness. They're not alone. The *adhan*, the Islamic call to prayer, rings out like clockwork every morning from countless minarets, the thin towers pointing heavenward like green fingers over mosques across cities worldwide. The call stirs the Islamic faithful from their beds before sunrise to attend the first of five ritualistic daily prayers.

“*Allahu akbar!*”

The phrase reverberates through the silent streets, slipping under doors and window frames, rousing slumbering souls. But what does it mean?

The common translation, “*God [Allah] is great,*” is misleading. A more precise interpretation is “*Allah is greater*” or “*greatest.*” The difference is crucial. It's a statement of comparison, not simply a declaration of divine majesty. Imagine a child on a playground taunting a playmate: “My dad is stronger than your dad!” It's not just about being strong—it's about being stronger, or the strongest.

This phrase, known as the *takbir*, carries an implicit message: hierarchy, dominance and submission. It declares whose god holds superiority and by extension, whose followers should yield.

But *Allahu akbar* is not limited to the *adhan*. It is also the rallying cry of radical Islamist attackers against those deemed infidels or apostates—Christians, Jews and any other non-Muslims. The October 7 massacre was no different.

The Soundtrack of Terror

On that Black *Shabbat*, Hamas terrorists took perverse pleasure in documenting themselves committing their bloody handywork—and then often publishing the footage themselves, making October 7 one of the best documented atrocities in history.

Wading through the footage of carnage reveals a crucial point. The terrorists did not storm across the border shouting “Viva Palestine!” or “Freedom!” or even “Two-State Solution Now!”

No. Their battle cry was “*Allahu akbar.*”

This wasn't about national sovereignty or political disputes. It was about theological dominance—about proving that their god reigns supreme and that everyone else must submit.

When 3,000 Hamas terrorists stormed into Israeli communities that day, spilling the blood of 1,200 men, women, children, babies, grandparents, Jews, Muslims and foreigners—their declaration was that Allah is greater, that Allah is supreme.

Battle Cry

More than a call to prayer for Muslims around the world, the *takbir* appears frequently in Muslim vernacular. Outside of religious or ritualistic contexts, it is often an expression to show emotion of either shock or joy.



But as demonstrated by Hamas and other Islamist terrorists around the world waging *jihād* (holy war), the *takbir* is also a battle cry. This is the rallying call driving the Islamist entities who have vowed to wipe “the Zionist enemy” off the map and establish a global Caliphate, placing Allah—or at least one of his messengers—on the throne.

The *takbir* “is the battle cry and the anthem for this fight for supremacy,” the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) explains. “Victory for Muslims is victory for Islam... Victory comes from [Allah] and proves his supremacy.”

The common translation of *Allahu akbar* as “God is great,” particularly in the media, “blurs its specific reference to Allah—and not to any other entity or deity,” MEMRI continues, and “strips it of its crucial aspect of Allah’s supremacy over all other entities and deities.”

The *takbir* appears on the flag of Iran, which was redesigned after the Islamist revolution in 1979, in which the new Islamist regime overthrew the more moderate shah. The phrase also appears on the flags of Afghanistan and Iraq—as well as the black flags of ISIS and other Islamist militant groups.

And when the Supreme Leader of Iran delivers a speech or sermon, the crowd often applauds with shouts and chants of “*Allahu akbar*”—as well as “Death to America” and “Death to Israel.”

Proof To the Nations

The God of Israel declared through His prophets throughout the Scriptures that He would bring the Jewish people back from exile to the Land of Israel “for the sake of My holy Name” (i.e. Ezek. 36:21–23). He declares in the same passage: “*And the nations shall know that I am the LORD*” (v. 23). In Psalm 105:7–11, the Lord vows that He will give “*the land of Canaan*” to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—the Jewish people. The Land belongs to the Jewish people, God declared, in order for His Name to be glorified, to demonstrate to the nations that He is the one true God.

Since the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and the San Remo Agreement of 1921, establishing all of the British Mandate of Palestine as a Jewish homeland, the Israelis have shown themselves willing to divide the land—and the Palestinians have not. Since the rebirth of the State of Israel in 1948, the Palestinians have rejected land-for-peace agreements and

negotiations time and again to their own detriment. Most recently, in 2005, Israel even withdrew entirely from the Gaza Strip, handing it over to the Palestinians to establish the state they said they wanted alongside their Jewish neighbors.

Yet as clearly evidenced by the cries of “*Allahu akbar*” on October 7, the only acceptable offer would be no Jewish state. Period. Hamas declared in its charter document in 1988 that “the land of Palestine is an Islamic Waqf [Muslim religious trust] consecrated for future Moslem [sic] generations until Judgement Day. It, or any part of it, should not be squandered: it, or any part of it, should not be given up.”

In short? According to Hamas, the land of Israel is for Allah and his followers only. The charter even quotes from the Koran: “Allah hath written, verily I will prevail, and my apostles: for Allah is strong and mighty.”



The Ultimate Battle

This is the heart of the October 7 massacre, of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and of Islamist regimes’ plans to decimate the Jewish state. The perpetual cycle of violence is not about land, borders or political control. We are witnessing in the Land of Israel—the birthplace of the three Abrahamic religions—the battle of the ages, the battle of the God of the Bible vs. Allah. The former declared that He would give the Land to His people as part of an everlasting covenant, while the followers of the latter vow that they will take the land for their god’s glory.

In a world where truth is increasingly seen as relative, the lines between fact and deception blur. This isn’t a struggle between two equal deities. God Himself makes it clear: “*I am the First, and I am the Last; besides Me there is no God*” (Isa. 44:6b). Unlike false gods that demand recognition through violence and force, the true God does not seek a place in a hierarchy of deities. He reigns alone.



(L) Ilse Strauss,
International
Education Director



(R) Kate Norman,
BFP Writer

WHY THEY FIGHT



SS murdered innocent civilians who took cover in the Warsaw Ghetto 1943

THIS MONTH, Israel will set aside two days to commemorate lives lost in the Holocaust, fallen soldiers and victims of terror attacks. These somber days of memorials and mourning then culminate in Israel's Independence Day, a joyous day of celebrating the rebirth of the state in 1948.

But before the joy of celebrating the Jewish state, Israelis remember the price of being stateless and the price paid to keep their state.

STOLEN DREAMS

Betje Jakobs was born in Zwolle, Netherlands, in 1920. She had a sister named Saartje, and her parents owned a prosperous sporting goods store, according to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Jakobs played the piano, knit and played tennis. She dated Maurits Wijnberg, the son of the Jewish family who owned the local kosher hotel.

Their bright future was dimmed when the Nazis stormed into the Netherlands in May 1940. In 1942, the Nazis confiscated the kosher hotel from the Wijnbergs, forcing them to move into a shack.

A bright spot amid the dark summer: Jakobs and Wijnberg were married on August 4, 1942. They couldn't share a home, as Jews weren't permitted to change addresses, so Jakobs remained with her family but visited her husband daily.

Jakobs and Wijnberg went into hiding, but decided to return after hearing a rumor that their families could be deported as punishment.

Betje Jakobs, 22, was rounded up with other Jews on October 12, 1942 and deported to Auschwitz, where she died. Wijnberg, 25, had been sent to a labor camp in the Netherlands with his brother before they were deported to Auschwitz on January 31, 1943 where they both died.

Jakobs and her loved ones—and six million other Jews murdered in the Holocaust—will be remembered on *Yom HaShoah*, often noted as a day to reflect on the high price the Jewish people paid for being stateless. If there had been a State of Israel at the time, a safe haven for Jewish people, would there have been a Holocaust?

SURVIVAL AND SACRIFICE

Amnon Zilbershpitz was born in 1924 in northern Transylvania, a beautiful, mountainous region of Romania. He had two siblings, and his family was wealthy.

Northern Transylvania fell under control of Nazi-occupied Hungary, and the 150,000 Jews living there were shipped off to death camps—including the Zilbershpitz family, who were deported to Auschwitz.

Zilbershpitz was separated from his family and sent to a labor camp, where he survived until the Red Army liberated the camps. His entire family had perished at Auschwitz.

Left alone in the world, Zilbershpitz decided to make a new home in his ancient homeland—Israel. He immigrated there in 1946, when Palestine was under the British Mandate.

Zilbershpitz moved to Kibbutz Dorot in southern Israel, where he met and fell in love with Sarah Novoplansky, and the two planned to get married.

In 1948, the State of Israel was reborn—and war immediately broke out when a coalition of outraged neighboring Arab states invaded, intending to wipe the newborn Jewish state off the map.

Zilbershpitz was drafted into the Givati Brigade and deployed to Kibbutz Beit Guvrin, which had been captured by Egyptian forces and used to launch attacks against Israeli forces. Zilbershpitz was shot and killed in battle.

He alone from the Zilbershpitz family had survived the Holocaust. He had made it to the Promised Land and planned a



Hamas terrorist shooting at innocent civilians who took cover in a bomb shelter October 7, 2023

future with the love of his life, until he sacrificed himself for his newfound state.

Amnon Zilbershitz and countless other soldiers and victims of terror will be remembered on *Yom HaZikaron*, as Israel honors those who paid the ultimate price fighting for the Jewish state, whether by picking up a gun and going into battle or simply living in the state as a Jew.

THE GRANDFATHER OF HOLIT

Moshe Ridler was born in 1931 in Hertsa, a Romanian city on the border with Ukraine. It was annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940, but the Romanian army regained control in 1941—and went straight to work expelling the Jews.

Ten-year-old Ridler was sent with his family on a death march of 300 kilometers (186 mi.) east to a ghetto in Transnistria. His mother died during the march, and afterward his 15-year-old sister died of exhaustion.

Ridler's father and remaining sister were sent to separate labor camps, and he was left alone in the ghetto, until he escaped through a hole in the fence with a group of boys who then took off running in different directions.

After running throughout the night, Ridler woke up in a house in a Ukrainian village nearly 30 kilometers (18.6 mi.) away. The family had found him nearly frozen in their field and knew he escaped the camp. They took him in until the end of the war, when he reunited with his father and sister.

Ridler immigrated to Israel in 1951 and moved to a community in central Israel which was established by Romanian Holocaust survivors. He married a fellow Romanian immigrant named Pia and had three children.

At the age of 90, Ridler, widowed, moved to Kibbutz Holit—just two kilometers (1.2 mi.) from Gaza—to be near his daughter, Pnina Hendler. He had a live-in caretaker from Moldova, Petrov Bushkov.

Ridler became a beloved part of the community and was known as the “grandfather of Holit,” one of his grandchildren told *Ynetnews*. He would dance with his walking stick and flirt with girls at the grocery store, his daughter told *Global News*.

On the morning of October 7, 2023, Ridler's daughter was in Tiberias visiting family. Ridler preferred to stay home and enjoy one last visit to the community pool, which was set to close for the season on October 8, according to *Tablet* magazine.

His daughter, the director of the *kibbutz* command center, was awakened in Tiberias by calls at 6:30 a.m. about rocket attacks. Hendler called to check on her father and spoke to Bushkov, who said they were safe.

But at the end of that terrible day, Ridler's daughter learned the worst: Hamas terrorists had blasted his home with an RPG and then entered, shooting and killing Bushkov. The grandfather of Holit was found dead in his bed.

THE PRICE OF FREEDOM

Whether in the form of Nazi soldiers or Hamas terrorists, Jewish people have faced the same enemy throughout the ages: hatred. In the Holocaust, Jews were ostracized by their neighbors and had no state, no safe haven of their own. In Israel's war for independence and the ensuing wars, they died fighting for their freedom, protecting their safe haven. And since 1948, some 4,800 Jews, including Moshe Ridler, have died in terror attacks.



This is why Israel fights against Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran and any other enemy attempting her destruction. Israel fights to protect her people, to prevent any more Betje Jakobses, Amnon Zilbershitzes or Moshe Ridders from falling victim to hatred.

Kate Norman, *BFP Writer*



FISH and VEGGIES

From an Underwater Relationship to Your Table

“WHERE DO VEGGIES COME FROM?”

It’s the question every parent hears at the dinner table, often followed by a dramatic grimace from toddlers who are unsure about what exactly is on their plate.

“Out of the ground” is often not convincing enough for curious young minds. But now, thanks to Israeli scientists, parents can simply answer, “From underwater!”

Yes, underwater. Imagine the confusion on your child’s face. “Underwater?” they’ll ask. And you can confidently explain that, yes, it’s possible. A team of scientists headed by Prof. Amit Gross at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev has pioneered a way to grow vegetables underwater in a unique symbiotic relationship with fish.

While toddlers might be more concerned with avoiding vegetables than the state of the world’s food supply, the reality is stark: global food sources are under immense pressure.

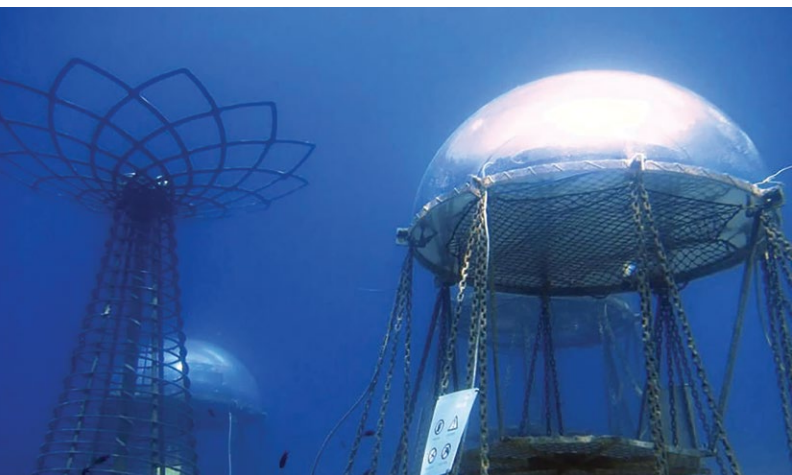
Greenhouse gas emissions, mass waste, global warming and rising populations have created an unstable food landscape. To tackle this mounting crisis, Israeli researchers have developed an advanced aquaponics system—a combination of aquaculture (growing fish) and hydroponics (growing vegetables in water). Instead of traditional farming methods that use soil, this system enables fish and vegetables to grow together, creating a more efficient and sustainable food source.

“Feeding the more than 8 billion people on the planet while reducing greenhouse gas emissions will require innovative technologies,” *Haaretz* quoted Gross as saying. “Fish are a sustainable, high-quality source of protein, and combining fish growth with vegetable production prevents waste. It’s a win-win-win.”

The system works in a closed loop. Fish, specifically Australian barramundi, provide nutrient-rich waste that fertilizes the plants. The plants, in turn, purify the water for the fish. Ta-da!

But it gets better. This system is far more efficient than typical aquaponics, which often produces excess waste. Using the method developed at Ben-Gurion University, bacteria break down the waste, turning it into methane, a greenhouse gas when uncontrolled but an energy source when harnessed. The end result? Fish, veggies and extra energy—all in one go!

So next time your child asks where veggies come from, you can say, “Underwater!” and know that thanks to Israel, it’s not just a clever answer but a glimpse into a future of sustainable food sources.



FireDome

The Iron Dome for Wildfires

A RED GLOW COVERS the horizon. Evacuation notices are issued. Birds and wildlife swarm the streets in a frenzy. Alien invasion? No, something less dramatic but still equally terrifying: a wildfire.

Wildfires are becoming an increasingly dire global threat, devastating landscapes and communities from Los Angeles to the arid regions of Israel. Israel's dry areas, already prone to natural wildfires, have faced an even greater risk during recent times of conflict. Any of the rockets shot at Israel that land in a dry, vulnerable area can quickly ignite massive fires.

But there is hope on the horizon.

FireDome, a startup founded in 2024 by CEO Gadi Benjamini and Dr. Adi Naor Pomerantz, is tackling the wildfire threat with an innovative defense system modeled after Israel's renowned Iron Dome. While many companies focus on detecting wildfires, FireDome's mission is to enhance firefighters' capabilities to respond to fires more efficiently.

"Our system is designed to help firefighters deal with multiple fires at once, including spot fires and embers, and to reach areas difficult to access due to logistical constraints," Benjamini explained to the *Times of Israel*.

The FireDome system is based on a two-pronged approach. First, a stationary mechanical launcher releases capsules—similar to projectiles—that disperse eco-friendly fire retardants, creating a protective barrier to block encroaching wildfires. The second layer relies on AI-powered technology that uses computer vision and sensors to detect and extinguish spot fires caused by airborne embers that have escaped the initial defense.

"These smart capsules contain sensors, allowing us to program their precise location to open and release the material in the air above the ground, creating a protective dome around the property. If a fire approaches, the system will block it, while the AI-powered detection reacts to spot fires," said Benjamini. "This is similar to how the Iron Dome protects a city, intercepting missiles before they can cause harm."

FireDome's technology has the potential to deliver a whole new level of protection from wildfires that will be the key to saving lives and property in the future.

California fires 2025



Nuvo

Pregnancy Monitoring for Mothers in Wartime

HAVING A BABY in normal times is stressful—let alone in wartime. For expectant mothers in unstable regions who are facing high-risk pregnancies, accessing affordable medical assistance can be almost impossible. Furthermore, if the mother is under high stress for whatever the reason, it can harm a baby's development. On top of that, limited access to quality care often forces low-income families to have costly Cesarean sections, perpetuating cycles of risk and debt.

An Israeli couple Oren Oz and his wife were no strangers to this struggle. Facing complications with their third child, an expensive C-section seemed inevitable. Instead, they opted for continuous hospital monitoring, which was still costly, but in the end, Oren's wife avoided surgery and delivered a healthy baby.

Prompted by their experience and hefty bill for the hospital monitoring, Oz founded Nuvo—a maternal-fetal health startup—with the help of investor Laurence "Larry" Klein. Nuvo's goal is to help all expectant mothers access quality care anywhere, anytime.

What does that look like? Nuvo is revolutionizing prenatal care with their newest invention: INVU™, a wearable belt packed with 12 non-invasive AI sensors that monitor the baby's health in real-time. Snap it on, pair it with the app and voilà—mothers can hear their child's heartbeat, track vital signs and even send data to a doctor without ever leaving their homes. Hospital-grade care, minus the hospital!

When terrorists attacked Israel on October 7, 2023, hospitals like Tel HaShomer, which had limited space for war casualties, were overwhelmed. Thankfully, pregnant patients were able to be sent home with INVU™ belts that allowed them to be safely monitored while freeing up room for the injured. INVU™ didn't just deliver hospital-grade care, it was a lifesaver.

With over US \$55 million in funding, according to Tracxn.com, and multiple awards, Nuvo and INVU™ are tackling the big problems: cost, quality and accessibility. From peacetime to wartime, Nuvo's aim is to ensure that every mom and baby receives the care they need. True to their mission, Nuvo's INVU™ belt is "Giving life a better beginning." And boy (or girl), they are doing just that!



Zoë McHenry, *BFP Writer*



Echoes of the Past

Recognizing the Signs of Rising Hatred

I HAVE SEEN EVERYTHING that's happening today before. I have lived through these times before. And I know where they lead.

I was born in 1924 in Karlsruhe, Germany. As a child, I witnessed Hitler's rise to power, which began around the time I was nine years old. For the first three years of school, everything was normal. I played ball with the other boys in the schoolyard, studied alongside them and was accepted without any difficulties.

Then, everything changed.

Once the Nazis came to power, the changes happened almost instantly. Indoctrinated at home by Nazi parents and now part of the Hitler Jugend (Youth), my classmates—once my friends—began to bully me. When I reported it to the teacher, he ignored it, which encouraged the bullies to continue. Although I was eager to learn and would raise my hand to participate in class, I was never called on again. I remember the Aryan (northern European, non-Jewish) boy who shared my desk once copying from me in a test. When the results came, he received high marks, while I fared terribly. Soon, I wasn't allowed to share a seat with an Aryan anymore and was moved to the back of the class. And then, officials decided that the Aryan boys should not have to breathe the same air as the filthy, stinking Jews, and Jewish pupils were forbidden from attending school altogether.

Outside the classroom, life for German Jews deteriorated too. Signs went up everywhere prohibiting Jews from entering stores, cinemas, restaurants, swimming pools and so forth, excluding us from public life. We lived our Jewish life at home and the synagogues, and avoided going out, leaving only when needed. What we experienced was a slow strangulation of Jewish life—much like what I'm seeing today in many parts of the world.

Ignoring Evil at Our Own Peril

When Hitler first came to power, some dismissed him as nothing but a temporary fanatic. They argued, "We can always vote him out again." Yet democracy didn't last.

One of the first things Hitler did was to burn down the Reichstag building, the national parliament of Germany. The Nazis blamed a Dutch communist, Marinus van der Lubbe, warning that his actions were part of a larger Communist conspiracy. Hitler's dictatorship officially began the day after the fire when he enacted a decree "for the Protection of the People and the State," which abolished all constitutional protection of political, personal and property rights. He dismantled democracy, eliminated democratic rights and paved the way for his expansion policy to the East.

Meanwhile, the Jews became the ultimate scapegoats. Every crisis, every failure, every problem—blamed on us. World War I? The Jews' fault. Inflation? The Jews' doing. Unemployment, unrest, you name it. All ascribed to the Jews.

History on Repeat

The period after the Holocaust gave the Jewish people a transient reprieve from open antisemitism. It is almost like the world developed a temporary conscience after witnessing the atrocities committed during the Holocaust. Yet antisemitism

didn't disappear. It has always been there, simmering below the surface, ready to erupt at the slightest excuse.

The war against Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon proved to be just that—an excuse for that ancient hatred to rise up in full force.

These days, the hatred goes by a different name though. Nobody wants to admit to antisemitism. Instead, they claim to be against Zionism. But Zionism is nothing more than the belief that Israel is home to the Jewish people and that we have a right to self-determination in our ancient homeland. That makes anti-Zionism merely an excuse, a new, modern way of being antisemitic.

Regardless of the name they choose, what is happening today on the city streets of Europe and around the world is exactly the same as the events that took place in Nazi Germany in the run-up to the Holocaust. Thugs lie in wait for Jews, attacking them on the streets of Amsterdam. Jewish people in Paris and London hide their Jewish identity for fear of being accosted. Synagogues in Montreal and Melbourne are targeted and almost burned to the ground. Healthcare workers bragging about murdering Jewish patients. Demonstrations and rallies calling for our annihilation. Antisemitic incidents and attacks at record highs.

And once again, the Jews are the scapegoats, blamed for our own persecution.

I've seen all this before, and if left unchecked, I know what happens next, what the next stage looks like.

All Is Not Lost

There's a difference between today and Nazi Germany in the 1930s: we have the State of Israel. Because the Jewish people have a homeland of their own with a strong defense force, a final solution or another Holocaust will not happen.

As a Holocaust survivor, there's a tremendous sense of safety for me in that fact. After fleeing Germany, I lived in England for more than 60 years. But here, now, in Jerusalem, I finally—finally—feel that I've come home.

This is where we belong. As Christians, you understand the deep connection of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel. And maybe if the rioters and demonstrators who chant "From the river to the sea" without any idea where that river or sea is located do a bit of research and educate themselves about this region and its people, they would come to that same understanding.

To you as Christians, I want to say thank you. Your steadfast support during this time means the world to us.



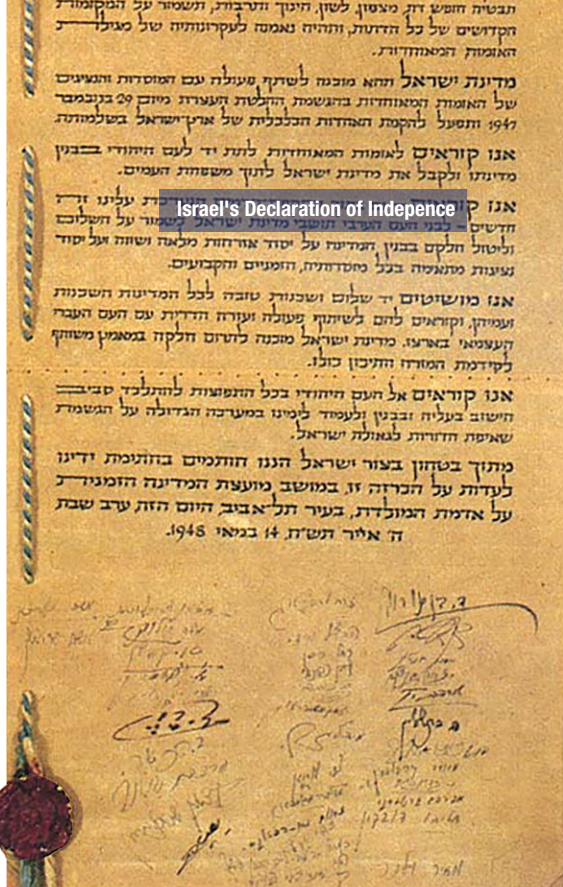
Walter Bingham

Walter Bingham is a Holocaust survivor, World War II veteran, recipient of the Legion d'honneur, holder of two Guinness Book of Records distinctions, one for the oldest working journalist alive and the other for the oldest active radio show host, and Bridges for Peace friend. At 101, he continues to write for the Jerusalem Report and hosts his own radio show, Walter's World.





Ben-Gurion declares the birth of the State of Israel



Israel's Declaration of Independence

ISRAEL

The Nation and the State



Public signs copy of Israel's Declaration of Independence



A WISE PERSON once remarked, “Artificial Intelligence (AI) may be intelligent, but it’s still artificial.”

I tested that when I queried my AI, “When did Israel become a nation?” It confidently responded: “Israel became a nation on May 14, 1948, when David Ben-Gurion declared the establishment of the State of Israel.” Upon seeing this answer, I shouted, “Incorrect, you artificial brain!” I had inquired about Israel’s nationhood, not statehood, and AI apparently doesn’t know the difference.

Simply stated, the nation is the people; the state is the polity or an organized political entity. Israel is intensely both, but the founding of the nation of Israel came about long before the people became a polity. Let us consider the past and present of the nation–state, Israel.

THE NATION

A nation is a group of people with a common language, history, culture and land. The people of Israel had all this and more centuries before their modern declaration of statehood. We mark the origin of the nation with Abraham 4,000 years ago and the organization of the nation under Moses 500 years later. This people, whom God fashioned for Himself, took possession of their common land, upon which they have sought self-determination in the millennia since.

THE STATE

A state is an association of people who have formed a government with laws, territorial boundaries and political independence. We mark the first state of the people of Israel as the Kingdom of Judah under David 3,000 years ago. That polity was shattered and the people scattered in the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions, then regathered and partially reconstituted under Roman domination until the second scattering, which took place in AD 135.

The state was lost, but the nation persisted. Though scattered worldwide for almost 2,000 years, the people retained their language, history, culture and *Torah*-based faith, which always called them home, always back to their land, always yearning for “Next year in Jerusalem.”

THE DECLARATION

The 1948 *Declaration of Israel’s Independence* reveals the nation’s miraculous return and the state’s stunning rebirth on its ancestral land: “Eretz Israel [the Land of Israel] was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books. After being forcibly exiled from their land, the people remained faithful to it throughout their dispersion and never ceased to pray and hope for their return to it and for the restoration in it of their political freedom.”

It means the world to the Jews to have their own state, yet the state is incidental to the nation. When we declare that we stand with Israel, we are first and foremost declaring that we stand with the nation, the people, both those regathered within the state and

those in the Diaspora (the Jewish population outside Israel). The nation is Jewish, so the state is Jewish. “Jewish” does not mean Judaism, though the two significantly overlap. Saying “Jewish” is like saying “Italian” or “Scandinavian,” thus referring to a historic, lingual and cultural identity that bonds a people in perpetuity.

THE BASIC LAWS

The Jewish state does not have a formal constitution. Instead, its Basic Laws are the bedrock for all law and principle by which the polity is governed. In 2018, Israel’s Knesset (parliament) adopted their fundamental Basic Law: “Israel, The Nation State of the Jewish People.” Though occasioning much controversy, the law simply attests to what has been the state’s reality since its establishment in 1948: “The Land of Israel is the historical homeland of the Jewish People, in which the State of Israel was established. The State of Israel is the nation state of the Jewish People in which it realizes its natural, cultural, religious and historical right to self-determination.”

This legislation affirms Israel’s identity as both a nation and a state, securing it as the only Jewish polity on the planet. Sadly, Israel’s detractors don’t want a uniquely Jewish state, proving that those who oppose the state ultimately oppose the people.

THE COMMONWEALTH

In the Bible, the Hebrew word *goyim* and the Greek word *ethne* identify the people of the nations. These are the Gentiles, the non-Jews. Scripture consistently addresses Israel as **the** nation (singular) while Gentiles are the **nations** (plural), far from the promises—and the burdens—which God assigned to Israel. The apostle Paul exhorts the Gentile believers in Ephesus to “remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh... were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:11a, 12).

Before Jesus (Yeshua), we Gentiles were not only woefully far from God but also excluded from the commonwealth or the national family of Israel. But gloriously, through our Jewish Messiah, we have been brought near to the family. And with family inclusion comes family responsibility, like standing with our Jewish kin through thick and thin.

THE INGRAFTING

Our Christian forebears largely failed our Jewish family, but our merciful God is giving us a new day of opportunity to get this right. Will we seize the day? While actively supporting the State of Israel, let us remember it is the **nation** into which we have been grafted. As Paul admonishes the Roman Gentiles: “...you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree...remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you” (Rom. 11:17,18b).



Dr. Bill Adams, BFP Writer

Sara Braverman

Hannah Szenes

Shulamit "Shula"
Kishik-Cohen

Zivia Lubetkin

Miriam Ben-Porat

Brigadier General
Orly Markman



Women Leading in Defense and Innovation



Dr. Kira Radinsky



Dr. Michal Tsur



Ruth Polachek



Gila Gamliel



Pnina Tamano-Shata



Sharon Haskel

ISRAEL IS KNOWN as a startup nation and a powerhouse of technological and military ingenuity. In recent years, a quieter yet equally revolutionary transformation has been taking place: the rise of women to leadership roles in fields critical to Israel's security and innovation. From elite units in the IDF to groundbreaking tech startups and government agencies, women are breaking barriers and shaping the nation's future.

Nazi-occupied Europe. After the war, she played a pivotal role in training recruits, emphasizing her belief in the importance of women in the fight for Jewish independence.

Hannah Szenes was a paratrooper and poet turned a national hero. Trained by the British during World War II, she parachuted into Europe to help rescue Hungarian Jews. Captured and executed by the Nazis, Szenes remains a symbol of courage and sacrifice.

Shulamit "Shula" Kishik-Cohen played a critical role as a spy in the underground efforts during the Haganah era. She gathered intelligence on Arab movements and helped facilitate Jewish immigration from Lebanon to pre-state Israel, often risking her life.

During the 1948 War of Independence, Yehudit Arnon worked tirelessly to mobilize supplies, aid combat units and support logistical operations. She and other women played significant roles in ensuring the survival of communities and the effective coordination of defensive efforts.

Zivia Lubetkin, a leader in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, immigrated to Israel and became deeply involved in the Haganah. Her expertise in resistance movements and combat training was instrumental during Israel's early days.



Pioneering in Defense

Women played critical roles in Israel's defense in pre-state militias like the Haganah, as well as in establishing and developing the modern IDF, proving themselves in challenging environments.

Sara Braverman, one of the first female members of the Haganah, served as a paratrooper during World War II, volunteering with the British army to aid Jewish communities in

IDF Formation and Beyond

As the IDF took shape, women's roles expanded. Tzvia (Sabina) Greenfeld was among the first female IDF officers, helping to establish training programs for women. She advocated for the inclusion of women in roles beyond administration, laying the groundwork for future generations.

Miriam Ben-Porat served as a legal advisor during the early days of the IDF, shaping military law and ensuring that

the defense force operated under the principles of justice and accountability. She later served as Israel's State Comptroller and was the first woman appointed to the Supreme Court.

Including women in Israel's defense was both practical and ideological. The pre-state ethos of equality emphasized that women were as vital as men to the survival and success of the Jewish state. This philosophy paved the way for women's contributions in combat and leadership, and set a precedent for their relevance to Israel's security.

Brigadier General Orly Markman made history as the first woman appointed to head the Military Court of Appeals, and her legal acumen has set a precedent for female officers aiming for such influential roles.

After Or Ben Yehuda's military service she was asked to re-enlist as a commander to set an example for other women. Ben Yehuda became commander of the Caracal Battalion, a coed combat unit. On October 7, she and her troops successfully defended their post, eliminating approximately 100 terrorists.

Israeli women are also making their mark within highly classified units. Unit 8200, the renowned intelligence and cybersecurity division, has a growing number of women in leadership roles. Lieutenant Colonel Avigail Landsman, who oversees critical operations, exemplifies the critical thinking and innovation that women bring to national security.

Trailblazers in Technology

Israel's tech industry, often hailed as the engine of its economic success, has seen a surge of female leaders. Dr. Kira Radinsky, co-founder of Diagnostic Robotics, has been a trailblazer in using artificial intelligence to revolutionize healthcare, creating predictive tools that improve patient outcomes.

Michal Tsur, the co-founder of Kultura, a leading video technology company, has driven innovation in online video platforms, which are now integral to education, entertainment and business worldwide. Her work reflects technical prowess and strategic vision, making her one of the most influential women in Israel's startup ecosystem.

Organizations like SheCodes, led by Ruth Polachek, nurtures the next generation of female tech leaders, offering coding workshops and mentorship programs across Israel to close the gender gap in high-tech industries.

Government Leadership and Policy Shapers

Women have ascended to key positions in the Israeli government, contributing to domestic and international advancements. Women have ascended to key positions in the Israeli government, contributing to domestic and international advancements. When Gila Gamliel was minister of Environmental Protection, she led sustainable energy and water conservation efforts, crucial for a country in one of the world's driest regions. Gamliel currently serves as minister of Science and Technology. Ayelet Shaked, former minister of Justice, influenced Israel's judicial policies, demonstrating the impact of women in high-stakes political arenas.

On the international stage, Tzipi Livni, Israel's former foreign minister, played a central role in peace negotiations with the

Palestinians and helped elevate Israel's diplomatic standing globally, demonstrating female leadership on a global stage.

Sharon Haskel, Israel's deputy foreign minister, has emerged as one of the nation's most dynamic political leaders. Haskel's rise to power is marked by her determination to bridge domestic concerns with global diplomacy, focusing on strengthening Israel's ties with allies and navigating complex global challenges.

Pnina Tamano-Shata, the first Ethiopian-born woman to serve in Israel's Knesset (parliament) and minister of Immigration Absorption, championed immigrant integration policies, ensuring smoother absorption of new citizens into Israeli society. Her leadership has uplifted marginalized communities and reinforced the importance of diversity in shaping Israel's future.



Challenges, Opportunities—And the Future

Despite these achievements, challenges persist. Women in Israel, as elsewhere, continue to face wage gaps, underrepresentation in executive roles and cultural stereotypes. However, initiatives like the Athena Fund, which provides scholarships and support for women, and the IDF's commitment to increasing female inclusion in elite units, are fostering a new generation of leaders.

Additionally, cultural shifts within Israeli society are paving the way for broader acceptance of women as leaders. Programs in schools and communities emphasizing gender equality and empowerment encourage young girls to enter male-dominated careers.

The stories of these Israeli women and many others like them illustrate a profound truth: women bring unique perspectives and skills that strengthen the fabric of society. In defense, technology and governance, Israeli women are driving the nation toward a more secure, innovative and inclusive future.



In the words of Golda Meir, Israel's first female prime minister: "Trust yourself. Create the kind of self that you will be happy to live with all your life." Today's female leaders embody this spirit, inspiring future Israeli generations to redefine what is possible.

Kate Norman, *BFP Writer*



The Little Bakery on Prophets Street

TUCKED BETWEEN MOSHE'S FALAFEL STAND and Eli's *makolel* (small grocery store) on Prophets Street is a little bakery. Each Friday morning without fail, I make my way to this bakery and buy a loaf of *challah* from Ronnie for our Shabbat dinner. It is one of the special moments of my week. Ronnie always greets me with a big smile and a cheerful, "How are you?" just as he has greeted all his customers during the 40 years he has operated the Arochas Bakery at 48 Nevi'im (Prophets) Street, Jerusalem.

One thing that sets the life of a long-term volunteer apart from a tourist are the opportunities we have to form relationships within the Jewish community. Even something as simple as buying a loaf of *challah* at the same bakery each week opens a door to understanding the culture and life in Israel on a different level than simply moving from hotel to hotel and tourist site to tourist site.

So, how did I meet Ronnie? For many years, the Bridges for Peace headquarters building was located a short distance from his bakery and many of the volunteers got into the habit of stopping there for a pastry or a coffee. For me, the first Friday night I tasted his *challah*, I felt like I was back in my childhood, eating my mother's delicious bread. I've never looked for *challah* anywhere else.

Arochas Bakery

The Arochas family's roots in the city run deep. Several hundred years ago, they arrived in Israel after they left Spain, taking a detour in Greece before reaching Jerusalem, their final destination. Ronnie is a 13th generation Jerusalemite, so it seems fitting that the building that houses the bakery is a historic one. Built in 1868, a few short years after Jerusalem began expanding beyond the Old City walls, it once housed the American Consulate.

It wasn't Ronnie's plan to become a baker. He shared that when he was young, he would help his father, who founded the family enterprise, and basically learned the trade from him. As an adult, there came a point when he found himself in need of a means to support his young family. And so, he followed in his father's footsteps and eventually inherited the business.

When I asked Ronnie if one of his children would take over when he retires, he shook his head emphatically. "No," he answered. It is hard work, he explained. Up at 2 a.m. to arrive at the bakery by 3 a.m., Ronnie, who does all the baking and mans the sales counter as well, has been hard at it for four hours when I pick up my *challah*! He works long, 12-hour days, and yet he always has a smile and a kind word for each of his customers.



Challah bread ready for Shabbat

אוריאל
חאפיה קטנה

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His clients are a varied group—much like the city of Jerusalem, where you will hear a profusion of languages and observe Jews, Arabs and foreign workers from Asia mingling together on its streets. During the interview, I witnessed a variety of people come in for a pastry or two, and in one case, several dozen of Ronnie’s baked treats, boxed up and ready to be enjoyed by a large group, perhaps at the office.

A Man with Hope

As we talked, I asked him what changes he has seen in the neighborhood, in the city and in the country during his 40 years as the owner of the little bakery on Prophets Street. He remarked that the neighborhood has become more Orthodox. That was evident as we watched people walk by the open doors of the bakery. And, of course, there are new high rise buildings across the street. As the Jewish people return from the nations to their ancient homeland, the city is growing upward to accommodate them.

Any discussion about “how are things” in Israel these days almost automatically ends up focused on the events of October 7, 2023 and the aftermath. Ronnie said that October 7 caught the country by surprise, much like the *Yom Kippur* War in 1973. It was like a punch in the face and a shocking failure on the part of the government and the military.

Ronnie was quick to tell me, “I am not political,” but like all Israelis, he has strong opinions. One of the observations he shared with me is that “the majority of Israel’s population has moved to the right.” He fears that the shift endangers Israeli democracy. His mental anguish was obvious when he spoke about being ashamed of some of the members of the Knesset

(parliament) and of his belief that the solution to the nation’s current problems will only come via a political change in the government.

After the bleak outlook he shared regarding his views on the situation with the government, I asked him, “Do you have hope?” He quickly responded, “Yes! I have hope. A man without hope is nothing.” I asked if he meant a man without hope **has** nothing? He reiterated, “A man without hope **is** nothing.”



And that, I believe is a quintessential picture of Israelis. Hope is what sustains them, even in the darkest times.

Janet Aslin, *BFP Writer*

After more than 20 years of volunteering in Israel off and on, I realize I still have a limited understanding about the complexities of being Jewish and living in a tiny country that is the focal point of much of the world’s attention—both good and bad. I would like to encourage anyone who wants to learn more to consider attending the 19th Institute of Israel Studies in Jerusalem on May 18–30, 2025. See page 36 for more information.





Survivors: Then and Now

I FOUND MYSELF sitting on an old couch, eating *pierogi* (Russian dumplings), listening to the life story of an elderly woman and her husband. They were real.

Now, that might sound like a strange statement, but for a young American adult fresh out her teenage years, the Holocaust and its survivors used to be confined to black-and-white photos in history books. Yet here they were, in living color, sharing their stories of miraculous survival.

The Holocaust is not bound to the dusty pages of history books. The survivors of that time are still with us, bearing the scars of unimaginable loss while enduring fresh pain today. On October 7, Hamas murdered, injured and kidnapped Holocaust survivors. Thousands have been forced to hide out in bomb shelters, while many more have been displaced from their homes; a cruel repetition of the past.

Bookended by war, their lives are living proof that humanity repeatedly inflicts upon others what no one would ever wish upon themselves. Every survivor's story is a warning—and a plea to a world that seems to have forgotten.



Kristallnacht and October 7

Listen to the voices of these Holocaust survivors and feel their pain, so that perhaps the hatred and violence inflicted on them will never again arrive at our doors.

"I never thought that as a Holocaust survivor, I would need to hide for my life again. I was shocked to see that eight decades after the Holocaust, the Star of David symbol has been painted once again on Jewish homes all across Europe and the United States to target and frighten them amid the devastating October 7 massacre. It echoes the antisemitic persecution I suffered as a child...In the Kibbutz Be'eri massacre, I know every single person, every single member of my kibbutz [collective community] and their children. For me, it was a second holocaust." —**Haim Raanan, 89, originally from Hungary, now a resident of Kibbutz Be'eri**

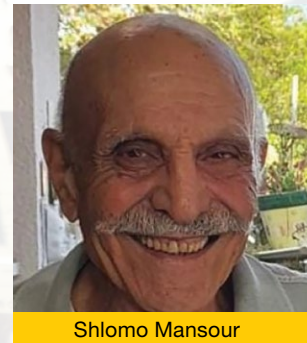
"I remember the morning [of October 7], when the attack began. I was alone at home and I was very scared...The whole time, I was afraid that the terrorists would enter my home. I went back to my childhood, to the time of the war, and I did not understand how this could happen to us here...I thought it was a war that Israel would never get out of, that it would be like World War II, and that they would take over the country," —**Raisa Matato, 88, originally from Dagestan, lived in Sderot**

"If Hitler didn't succeed in killing me, they [Hamas] won't either." —**Eva Erban, 95, originally from Czechoslovakia, survived Auschwitz and the death march, now lives in Ashkelon**

"I survived the Nazis in the concentration camps; my entire family perished. From the depths of despair, I clung to the earth and planted seeds in Zion...But suddenly, on October 7, 2023, from between the evil barbed wires, emerged the horrifying scenes of fire, dust, murder and the terrible massacre of innocent lives, reaching me once again. My dearest grandson was murdered while protecting his wife and their one-month-old daughter. And my dearest granddaughter and her husband were slaughtered while defending their ten-month-old twins. Once again, I find myself exhausted, in despair, sinking. And I have no more land to hold onto." —**Yosef Winner, 97**

"I opened the door, went out, and saw my neighbor's daughter lying in a pool of blood. I lifted my eyes and saw a Hamas terrorist standing 10 meters away from me. He looked me in the eyes and pointed his gun at my face...In my heart, I prayed, and slowly turned around—and went back to my house. I was sure he would shoot me. I remember that as I walked, I thought: 'God, I have lived a full life. Take me, I'm old. Just make them leave the children alone. Save their lives.' It didn't help. My neighbor's two children were murdered that same morning...I'm tired, exhausted, but when I close my eyes, I see the terrorist's eyes, get frightened and wake up." —**Ella Panomarov, 87, from Ofakim**

"Shlomo was born in Iraq and lived through the Farhud [a pogrom carried out against the Jewish population of Baghdad, Iraq, in June 1941]. Arabs murdered, raped [and] abused babies, kidnapped, beheaded, looted and burned shops that had been marked with red paint ahead of time. It was the Kristallnacht of the Jews of Iraq. Shlomo saw things that stayed with him all his life. We did not imagine such things would return in our sovereign state... [Shlomo] is going through another Holocaust in his old age." — **Hadassah Lazar, 70, originally from Iraq and sister of Hamas's oldest hostage, Shlomo Mansour, 86, a Holocaust survivor. On February 11, relatives learned he had been murdered and his body kidnapped. On February 26, his body was returned to Israel .**



Shlomo Mansour

"He sent me a message, and [now] his voice now echoes around the world: 'Grandma, I'm a little stressed. There are terrorists in the kibbutz. I'm okay. Take care of yourself; it can happen anywhere.' Around 9:45 a.m., I saw a message from him: 'They're burning my house. I'm afraid I'll suffocate.' I immediately thought of it as the second Holocaust. I didn't wait for someone else to say it. I remembered the burning towns I had heard about in stories, and the terrible song 'The Town is Burning' came to mind in Yiddish, and I started singing it to myself." —**Bella Haim, 86, originally from Poland and a resident of Kibbutz Gvulot, is the grandmother of Yotam Haim, who Hamas kidnapped to Gaza and who was later mistakenly killed by IDF soldiers.**

"I thought, 'What, is this the same period of the Nazis?' It can't be! The dragging of the people of Be'eri, Nir Oz, Kfar Aza, Kissufim, Holit. It's the same thing. It reminded me of the same thing...I was very, very unwell. I even felt a feeling, it's hard to explain, of disgust, of fear, of terrible memories." —**Gad Partok, 93, originally from Tunisia now resident of Ashkelon**

"I have a hearing problem and I was not at all aware of what was happening outside. Only the next day, they told me that terrorists had moved through this neighborhood. Luckily, I didn't see them, otherwise, I would have died of fear on the spot. The stories I heard about what happened here reminded me of stories from World War II. There are still alarms in Sderot and I'm scared. When I'm alone, it's even worse. I'm really shaking with fear." —**Rosa Shotsky, 88, originally from the former Soviet Union, now resident of Sderot**



Zoë McHenry
BFP Writer

Caesarea National Park



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FAQ





Thyme Chicken with Caramelized Lemon and Dates

ALTHOUGH LAMB IS TRADITIONALLY associated with the Passover meal, here is a tasty alternative made with chicken thighs and bursting with the distinct Israeli flavors of Medjool dates and lemon. So, if you would like to vary the menu, we guarantee this will be a delightful addition to your *seder* meal this year!

Ingredients

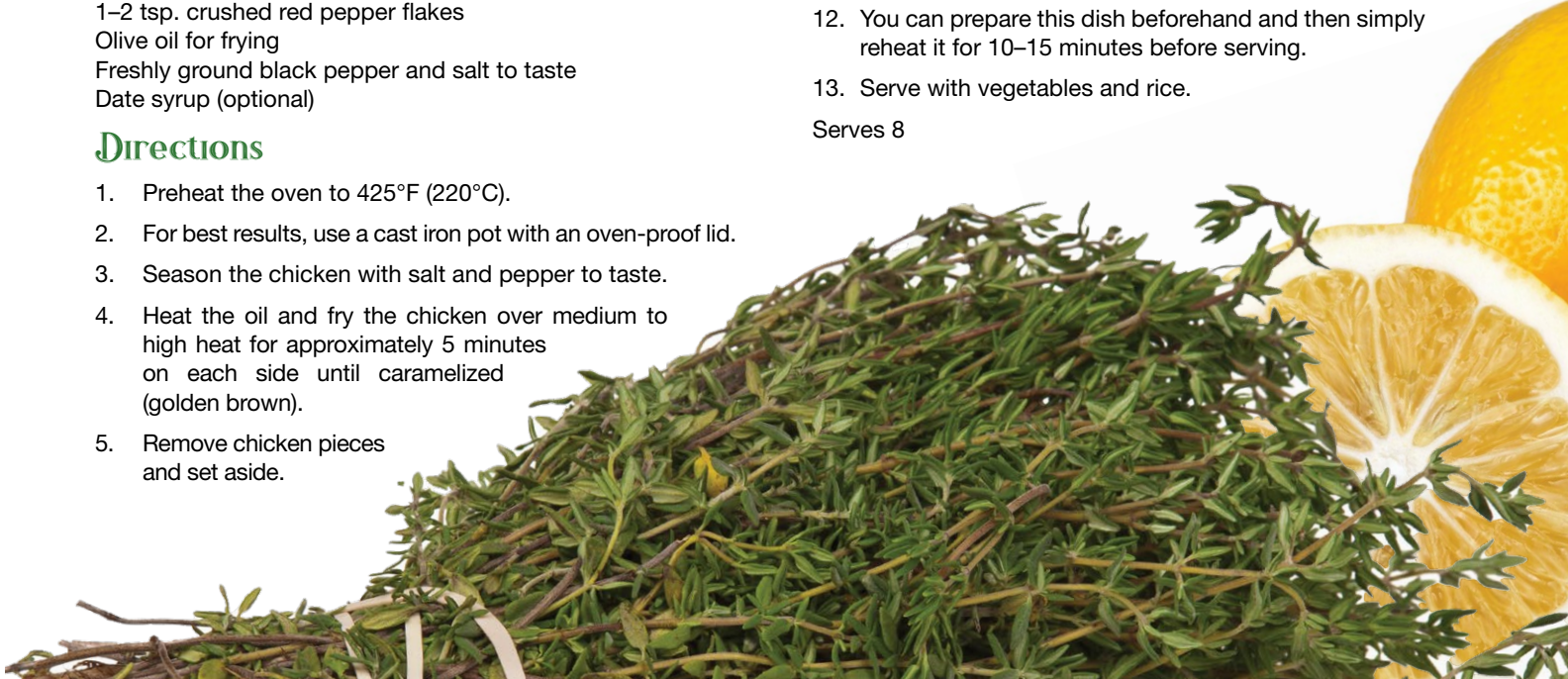
6 lbs. (2.7 kg.) chicken thighs (skin on, bone-in)
1 large lemon, sliced
4 shallots (or 2 red medium-sized red onions)
10 Medjool dates, pitted
8 sprigs of thyme (plus a few extra sprigs for garnish)
1–2 tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
Olive oil for frying
Freshly ground black pepper and salt to taste
Date syrup (optional)

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 425°F (220°C).
2. For best results, use a cast iron pot with an oven-proof lid.
3. Season the chicken with salt and pepper to taste.
4. Heat the oil and fry the chicken over medium to high heat for approximately 5 minutes on each side until caramelized (golden brown).
5. Remove chicken pieces and set aside.

6. Add the lemon slices to the pot and brown on both sides.
7. Return the chicken pieces to the pot and arrange the browned lemon slices on and around the chicken.
8. Add the shallots, dates, thyme, red pepper flakes and two cups of water.
9. For a sweeter dish, add a drizzle of date syrup.
10. Cover the pot with the lid or tin foil and bake in the pre-heated oven for 25–30 minutes.
11. Remove from the oven and let rest for 10 minutes in the pot before transferring to a serving dish.
12. You can prepare this dish beforehand and then simply reheat it for 10–15 minutes before serving.
13. Serve with vegetables and rice.

Serves 8



Therapy With a Tail



WHAT IF YOU COULD WITNESS Christian generosity in action, transforming lives in Israel? Recently, during a visit to Neve Landy, a home for troubled boys, I had the opportunity to do just that. Neve Landy is unique in its model, mission and the lives it changes. Let me share this exceptional place in southern Israel with you.

No Place Like Home

Unlike large institutional settings, Neve Landy is designed to create a warm, family-like atmosphere, caring for troubled boys who have suffered trauma, abuse or neglect. Many of these boys have spent significant time in mental health facilities due to conditions like PTSD, severe anxiety, depression and ADHD. Unable to thrive in typical family, orphanage, foster home or school settings, they often pose a danger to themselves and others, leaving places like Neve Landy as their last chance for healing.

Under the leadership of director Shosham, Neve Landy provides a holistic approach to care, combining educational tutoring, mentorship and counseling. The 50 boys who range in age from six to 16 live in dorms, separated by age to foster a sense of belonging and age-appropriate relationships. The community focuses on nurturing each child's specific needs and helping them overcome their past trauma, all through personalized support and therapy.

Haven in a Storm

Despite its peaceful setting, Neve Landy is not immune to the harsh realities of its location, just 15 miles [24 km.] from the Gaza border. The haven was deeply impacted by the war following October 7, 2023. "The boys struggled," reflected Shosham. "The sirens were constant. The halls were empty, 80% of my staff were called up for reserve duty."

Many of the boys at Neve Landy originally come from the surrounding *kibbutzim* [collective communities], and as Shosham pointed out, "Although they are here, war is everywhere."

With heightened anxiety among the boys and limited staff, the challenges of maintaining a safe and supportive environment became exceedingly difficult.

On top of that, as with any war, funding became tight. "Organizations now only give money to [the] war effort. It makes sense, but we suffered," Shosham told us.

The community found itself scrambling for external support to fund its rehabilitation programs and therapy for the boys. Faced with difficult decisions, even something as beneficial as dog therapy was at risk of being canceled.

During this trying time, Bridges for Peace stepped up, fully funding the dog therapy program. "This therapy wouldn't be possible without your help," Shosham told me. "Christians like you make a real difference."



Therapy in the Training

Witnessing the dog therapy program firsthand was an exceptional experience. As we entered a spacious room, the sound of hushed chatter filled the air. Young boys were gathered around two dogs, eagerly giving commands in Hebrew. The boys were very excited, to the point of jumping and yelling. Their instructor settled the situation by leading them in a breathing exercise, which calmed the group. He then took them outside to a grassy area with a garden, basketball court, fruit trees and a ping-pong table. Even to me as a visitor, it felt home-like.

Despite the language barrier, the boys were ecstatic to tell us newcomers how to train the dogs. I took turns commanding the two dogs; first the bigger one, then the smaller shy one the boys called Angie. She was quite nervous with all the activity around her.

“She’s new but very old,” the dog therapist shared. “Some of the dogs I bring are rescues, others I buy.”

I was puzzled. Weren’t these trained therapy dogs? But then I understood: the dogs themselves **are** the therapy. I saw the way they responded to the boys’ hyperactivity, cowering or barking at loud noises or becoming gentle in a calm environment. As the boys trained the dogs, the dogs were teaching the boys emotional regulation, responsibility, patience and communication. That in itself was the therapy. What looked like a regular interaction was much more than that.

Like a “mirror,” the dogs reflected the boys’ emotional states. The therapist explained the importance of slow breathing and calming oneself down before interacting with the dogs. This helps the boys understand the importance of controlling their emotions—not only when training the dogs but also in their everyday lives.

I witnessed one boy nudging another boy for the leash. They exchanged some words and finally, the boy passed the leash to his friend. They were sharing! I could see the process of learning responsibility, patience and communication all taking place in the span of a few minutes.



Angie



Why Dogs?

But with so many available therapies teaching these same lessons, I questioned what made this therapy so special.

“I think kids feel before they know. Kids don’t want you to know their mind; they want someone to understand their heart. And dogs are the best way to get to a kid’s heart,” the therapist said. “The bond that forms between the boys and the dogs creates an emotional connection that many of these children have never experienced before—one based on love, trust and compassion.”

Looking at the dogs and their wagging tails, I knew he was right. Dogs don’t judge. Instead, “they offer unconditional love.”

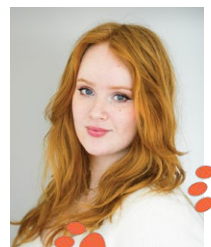
A Real Difference

The results speak for themselves. According to the therapist, the boys show an “80–90% improvement” in their emotional well-being.

The therapy session ended with firm handshakes, dog hugs and laughter. The boys ran around, joyful and carefree—a rare sight for those who have experienced so much pain. This is the beauty of Neve Landy—despite the hardships, the boys here are given a chance to be kids again.

And without the support of organizations like Bridges for Peace, none of this would be possible. “We are here to help them all the time—and with your support, we can make a real difference,” Shosham concluded.

Zoë McHenry
BFP Writer



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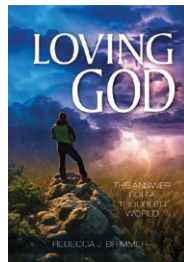
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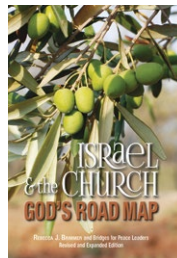


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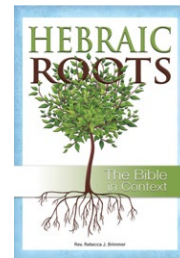
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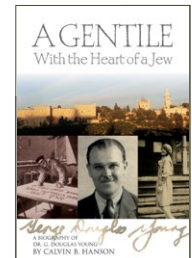
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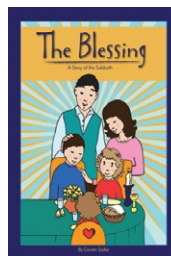
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