



WORD

FROM JERUSALEM



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The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem was established in 1980 in recognition of the biblical significance of all of Jerusalem and its unique connection to the Jewish people. Today the ICEJ represents millions of Christians, churches, and denominations to the nation and people of Israel. We recognize in the restoration of Israel the faithfulness of God to keep His ancient covenant with the Jewish people. Our main objectives are:

- To stand with Israel in support and friendship
- To equip and teach the worldwide church regarding God's purposes with Israel and the nations of the Middle East
- To be an active voice of reconciliation between Jews, Christians, and Arabs, and to support the churches and congregations in the Holy Land

From its head offices in Jerusalem, the ICEJ reaches out into more than 170 countries worldwide, with branch offices in over 90 nations.

Our vision is:

- To reach every segment of Israel's society with a Christian testimony of comfort and love
- To reach and actively represent to Israel the support of denominations, churches, and believers from every nation on Earth

The Christian Embassy is a non-denominational faith-based ministry supported by the voluntary contributions of our partners and friends across the globe. We invite you to join with us as we minister to Israel and the Jewish people worldwide by donating to the ongoing work and witness of the ICEJ.



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FROM THE DESK OF THE SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT

Dear friends,

I write on behalf of our president, Dr. Juergen Buehler, who is recovering from a second back surgery. We sincerely appreciate how many of you have been praying for him and expect his return to health and ministry soon.

After more than nine long months of war, many Israelis are losing hope and strength to see this battle through to victory, given the high price they are paying. They need our prayers for endurance, resolve, and total trust in the God of Israel.

Through it all, the Christian Embassy has not wavered in our determination to stand by Israel. In this month's *Word From Jerusalem*, you'll read about several areas of assistance we are engaged in to help the Israeli people down the long road to recovery, especially those who live along the Gaza border. You'll also read a fascinating article about the political situation and increased antisemitism in France, how it is impacting the numbers of Jewish people considering Aliyah, and how the ICEJ is stepping in to help.

But October 7 and the unprecedented worldwide antisemitism that followed has impacted not just the Jewish community in France but worldwide. Despite the war, the Jewish Agency estimates Aliyah could be upward of 37,600 this year: the Jewish people are returning to their homeland, just as God promised in the Bible. In My teaching article "By My Spirit," I unpack several scriptural "patterns" the Jewish people experience whenever being restored to the Land of Israel. *I encourage you to read it.*

We cannot say for certain where this conflict is going or when it will end. But we remain confident that God will see Israel through to victory and that the Lord wants us to gather again for the Feast of Tabernacles in October. It is already clear this Feast will be more like a solidarity mission, and many Christians tell us they are determined to show their support for Israel by attending. We will gather one year after the October 7 terror invasion from Gaza, which occurred just two days after we visited the border area with over 700 Feast pilgrims at the end of last year's Feast. We have promised the leaders of regional councils in Israel that we will return this Sukkot.

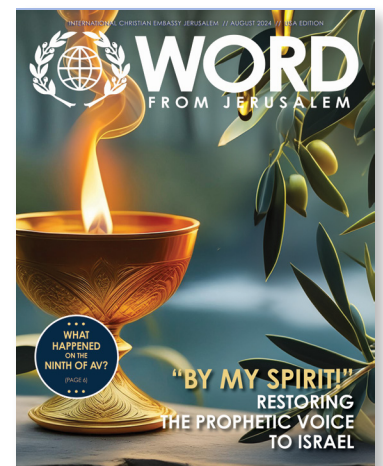
Thank you for caring for Israel and standing with our ministry in these challenging times. May the Lord grant you a full reward for your kindness to His people (Ruth 2:11-12).

In His abounding love and grace,

David R. Parsons
Senior Vice President & International Spokesman
International Christian Embassy Jerusalem

COVER PHOTO: An illustration of Zechariah 4 (generated using Adobe Firefly/Photoshop)

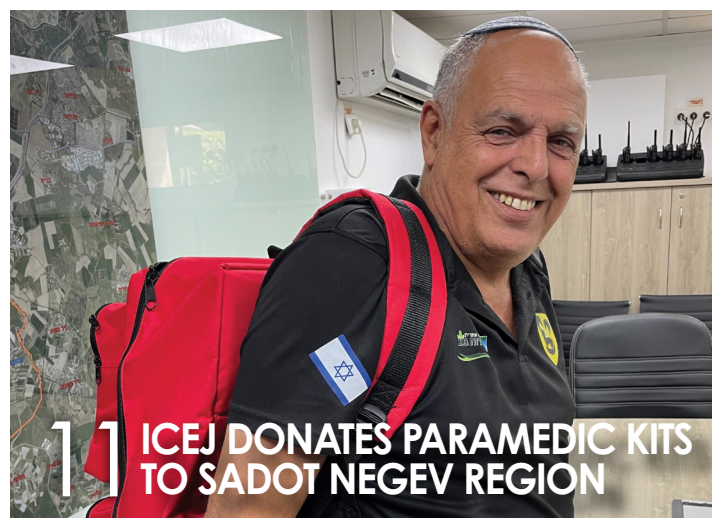
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FEATURED TEACHING

4 "BY MY SPIRIT!"

RESTORING THE PROPHETIC VOICE





This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the Lord of hosts. “Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone with shouts of ‘Grace, grace to it!’”

(ZECHARIAH 4:6-7)

“BY MY SPIRIT!” RESTORING THE PROPHETIC VOICE

BY DAVID PARSONS, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT & INTERNATIONAL SPOKESMAN

An illustration of Zechariah 4 and the golden lampstand with oil and a burning flame alongside olive leaf branches and dripping golden oil (generated using Adobe Firefly/Photoshop)

As we near the Feast of Tabernacles in October, our Feast theme this year has become even more relevant: “By My Spirit, says the Lord!”

When we chose this theme (before last year’s Feast), we did not know just how fitting it would now be. Last year’s Feast ended just before the horrific massacres of October 7, which came as such a shock to us after visiting the Gaza border with 700 Feast pilgrims just two days earlier. Ironically, the last speaker at our Solidarity Rally in Sderot that day was Israeli Commander Brig. Gen. Amir Avivi, who ended his security briefing with the words: “Israel’s victory is ‘not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord.’”

The ensuing war has caused much pain, grief, destruction, and uncertainty across Israel. It also has reminded us that whenever the Jewish people are

It also has reminded us that whenever the Jewish people are being restored to *Eretz Israel*, they must hold a trowel for building in one hand and a sword for defending with the other.

being restored to *Eretz Israel*, they must hold a trowel for building in one hand and a sword for defending with the other. Such was the case when Joshua led the ancient Israelites in first possessing the “promised land” and then again when Ezra and Nehemiah led them back to rebuild Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity. That seems to be the pattern the Jewish people must accept and follow whenever they return to their ancestral homeland—even today to modern Israel.

Another pattern emerges from the biblical accounts of Israel’s returns to the land that connects to our 2024 Feast theme. Once back in the land, Israel’s leaders always brought the people to a place of repentance and spiritual renewal regarding their covenant relationship with God.

We see this pattern in Scripture when the Israelites reentered the land from exile in Egypt. One of the first

things Joshua did was build an altar to God on Mount Ebal and lead the people in repenting and renewing their vows at Sinai to worship and serve Him alone (Joshua 8:30–35).

We also see this pattern when Nehemiah gathered the people in solemn assembly to repent for all the sins and rebellion that had caused their exile to Babylon and renew their covenant with God. Nehemiah 9 records how they came together with “fasting, in sackcloth, and with dust on their heads ... and they stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers” (vv. 2–3). Nehemiah 9 continues:

[O]ur fathers acted proudly [and] hardened their necks (v. 16). ... Yet in Your manifold mercies, You did not forsake them in the wilderness (v. 19) ... trouble ... has come upon us ... from the days of the kings of Assyria until this day (v. 32) ... [but] You are just in all that has befallen us; for You have dealt faithfully, but we have done wickedly.” (vv. 16, 19; 32–33)



This solemn assembly took place around the altar of the Lord that Ezra had built. The first three chapters of the book of Ezra record how the Jews had authority from the first Persian king, Cyrus, to rebuild their temple and restore the worship of Jehovah according to their law. Cyrus had not only empowered them with an official decree but even returned the temple treasures for use once more in the house of the Lord. So the altar was set up, sacrifices were renewed, and the feasts were kept—and the foundation of the temple was laid.

But then Cyrus passed away and their grant of authority with him. The funds dried up. Opposition to the work also arose from the Samaritans and other local leaders, such as Sanballat and Tobias, who tricked the next Persian ruler to order a stop to the building. Meanwhile, some of the old-timers who had seen the splendor of Solomon’s Temple complained that the glory of this house could not compare to the glory of the former house. Alas, frustration set in and work on the Lord’s “house” ceased.

Indeed, for the next 16 years, the work languished, until the Lord restored a prophetic flow to the nation by sending the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to encourage and inspire the people to finish the house of the Lord. This is recorded in Ezra 5, which adds that “the prophets of God [were] helping them.”

The prophet Haggai came and proclaimed that the people should not compare the unfinished house with the former temple, but they must “be strong ... and work; for I am with you,” says the Lord of hosts ... ‘My Spirit remains among you; do not fear! ... I will fill this temple with glory ... [and] the glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former’” (Haggai 2:3–9).

At the same time, the prophet Zechariah proclaimed this work would be completed not by might (by the sword, although it helps) and not by power (by royal decree or human authority, although that helps too). The work would be completed “‘by My Spirit,’ says the Lord.”

Indeed, the mountain of rubble where the temple once stood would become a level plain, and the “capstone”—the finished work—would be brought forth with shouts of “Grace, grace to it!” (Zechariah 4:7).

Zechariah also assured that the Israelite prince Zerubbabel had laid the foundation of the temple and that Zerubbabel’s hand would also finish it (Zechariah 4:9).

In chapter 4, Zechariah also sees a vision of two olive trees feeding a golden lampstand, which the angel later explains are “the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth” (Zechariah 4:2–3, 11–14). There are various interpretations and speculations about the two figures in this imagery, which the apostle John also alludes to in Revelation 11 as the “two witnesses.” I have my own view on these two prophetic figures, but for now, we will

In chapter 4, Zechariah also sees a vision of two olive trees feeding a golden lampstand, which the angel later explains are “the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth.”

focus on the clear message of these passages: The nation of Israel will complete its mission, find its place of repentance, and be renewed in right relationship with God—but first, it needs a restored prophetic flow.

In Israel’s modern-day return, the nation has yet to find that place of national repentance and recovery once back in the land. Yet the prophets speak of it everywhere—for example, in Joel 2:12–32.

Hosea also foretells of this promised moment: “Come, and let us return to the Lord; for He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up,



A clay seal from the Persian period recently discovered in the City of David excavations that may depict the rebuilding of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem (Shai Halevy/Israel Antiquities Authority)

that we may live in His sight” (6:1–2). The Hebrew word for “return” here connotes not only physical return but also *teshuvah*: repentance and return to God.

I believe Revelation 11 is also an incredible passage assuring us that a powerful prophetic flow will be restored to Israel to bring them to that place of national repentance and to complete the redemptive work of God in this people.

Today, we must pray that the people of Israel will not be covered by the threats and relentless attacks of radical Islamist regimes and terror militias but that they will defend themselves and keep possessing the land and building up Jerusalem. We also must pray for world leaders to become like Cyrus, and even Darius and Artaxerxes—each of whom were inspired by God’s Spirit, after all, to empower the Jews to build again the city and temple in Jerusalem.

Ultimately, it is not by the might of the sword nor by the power of royal authority and human decrees but by the Spirit of the Lord that Israel will reach its redemptive destiny in God. Let us pray for a restoration of the divine prophetic voice to the nation of Israel and its leaders in our day and for willing hearts to hear and obey that promised prophetic voice. For it is only in obedience to that voice of the Lord that Israel will find its way through the opposition and obstacles ahead, even if all nations try to stand in the way. 🌐



Left image: The famous Cyrus Cylinder decree in cuneiform letters on display in the British Museum that corroborates the biblical accounts that Persian King Cyrus allowed the Jews to rebuild their temple in Jerusalem (source: Wikimedia Commons/Mike Peel-www.mikepeel.net)



WHAT HAPPENED ON THE NINTH OF AV?

KAREN ENGLE, ICEJ MANAGING EDITOR

The Ninth of Av, or Tisha B'Av in Hebrew, is a yearly fast day in Judaism that remembers several tragedies that occurred on that date in Jewish history. “Av” is the sixth month on the Hebrew calendar, so the “ninth of Av” is the ninth day of the sixth month—this year, from sundown on August 12 to sundown on August 13.

A Day of Mourning

Every other major holiday on the Hebrew calendar except the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) is a time of joy. But because of the terrible events that occurred on this date—particularly the destruction of the First and Second Jewish temples—the Ninth of Av for the Jewish people is a day of deep mourning for what was lost. Each year on that date, the Jewish people spend the day reflecting on those dark moments in their history.

On the Ninth of Av, it's customary to grieve like one would mourn the loss of a family member. The Jewish people refrain from food and drink, listening to music, sitting on chairs, wearing leather shoes, shaving or cutting hair, and even studying the Torah. It's traditional to sit on low stools and read the book of Jeremiah, which recounts just one of those terrible Ninth of Avs 2,000 years ago when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BC:

The elders of the daughter of Zion sit on the ground and keep silence; they throw dust on their heads and gird themselves with sackcloth. The virgins of Jerusalem bow their heads to the ground. My eyes fail with tears, my heart is troubled; my bile [liver] is poured on the ground because of the destruction of the daughter of my people ... How shall I console you? ... For your ruin is spread wide as the sea; who can heal you? (Jeremiah 11:10–11, 13)

Does This Date Matter for Christians?

Though the Ninth of Av is a significant and sad date in Jewish history, it's also a date connected to prophecy in the Bible and is, therefore, of interest to Christians.

King Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem on the Ninth of Av in 586 BC, and in several waves, took the Jewish people captive to Babylon. However, even before they were exiled, the prophet Jeremiah brought his people a word of hope: their captivity would end after 70 years (25:11). Indeed, that prophecy was fulfilled in 537 BC when gentile King Cyrus released the Jews to return home 70 years after their captivity so they could rebuild Jerusalem.

Then, in AD 70, Titus of Rome destroyed Jerusalem again on the Ninth of Av. This time, Jews were forced out of Jerusalem and exiled to *many* nations, not just one—and is why more than half of the Jewish population today does not live in Israel, just as Scripture foretold:

Then the Lord will scatter you among all peoples, *from one end of the earth to the other*, and there you shall serve other gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known. (Deuteronomy 28:64)

When the children of Israel returned to Jerusalem after Babylonian captivity, it was just from one nation. But the Hebrew prophets spoke of a day when God would bring His people home “a second time” (Isaiah 11:11) from “among the *nations*, wherever they have gone” (Ezekiel 37:21; notice Ezekiel here uses the plural “nations”). Moses prophesied that this regathering would be from “one end of the earth to the other”—a worldwide regathering.

But to be brought back, they had to first be exiled—which happened twice, both times on the Ninth of Av. Each tragedy set into motion what the prophets foretold, fulfilling prophecy about Israel's exiles and affirming the legitimacy of God's Word.

But they confirm to us something else.

The Coming Spiritual Restoration of Israel

The existence of Israel today and God's people living and thriving in the city of Jerusalem is without a doubt fulfilled prophecy. Even so, it's merely a shadow of something even

more remarkable to come (Colossians 2:16–17), when God will completely restore His people physically to the land but also *spiritually* to Him:

I will bring them back, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. They shall be My people and I will be their God, in truth and righteousness.” (8:8)

Tragic events like the destruction of the two temples can seem negative, as if God has forgotten His people. Yet when aligned with His Word, it's evidence of His faithfulness. The people of Israel are alive today and dwelling in Israel—and specifically Jerusalem—because God willed it to be so. The destruction of the First and Second temples on the Ninth of Av and Israel's subsequent exile to one nation and then many nations remind us of His faithfulness: what He says in His word will happen; He will fulfill *everything* He has promised. 🌍

TRAGIC EVENTS MOURNED BY JEWS ON THE NINTH OF AV

- 1313 BC – The spies returned from the Canaan (which later became the Land of Israel) with a bad report.
- 586 BC – The Babylonians destroyed the first Jewish temple (Solomon's Temple).
- AD 70 – The Romans destroyed the second Jewish temple (Herod's Temple).
- AD 135 – Bethar, the last stronghold of the Bar Kokhba war, was captured and the Jewish rebels massacred.
- AD 136 – The Roman emperor Hadrian rebuilt Jerusalem, called it Aelia Capitolina, and restricted Jews from entering it.
- 1290 – Jews were expelled from England under King Edward I.
- 1492 – Jews were expelled from Spain under King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella.
- 1914 – World War I began (which many historians conclude continued into World War II, resulting in the Holocaust)
- 1942 – Treblinka death camp began operating, and deportations began from the Warsaw Ghetto.

THE CONCEPT OF A “JUST WAR”

BY DR. JUERGEN BUEHLER, ICEJ PRESIDENT

Many churches today struggle with the concept of a just war. Most Western countries have not had wars in recent decades; thus, we have developed a pacifist attitude toward any war situation. But how should Christians approach war? This question is especially relevant considering Israel's current conflict with Hamas.

Our friend Prof. Gerald McDermott recently stated at the ICEJ Envision conference that “pacifism is the immoral privilege reserved for those who sit safely at home.” In a way, our theology around pacifism developed in countries that were living in peace over the last seven to eight decades. But if you go back in church history, probably the most profound voice on this topic was Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century. He defined the idea of a “just war” as having three requirements.

First, declaring war is not the business of a private person; it needs proper authority. Back then, you had little fiefdoms that were constantly at war. Aquinas said that you need a proper political structure to declare war. It was Israel's democratically elected government that is waging this war against Hamas.

Second, a just war requires the need to right a grievous wrong—someone has been an aggressor and deserves to be held to account. A just war seeks to correct a nation for refusing to make amends for wrongs it has inflicted or restore what another nation has unjustly seized. This certainly applies to Gaza—Hamas brutally attacked Israel, took hostages, and broke many moral standards.

Third, the authority seeking to right the wrong must have upright intentions to advance a moral code or remedy an injustice. We should reject wars waged for motives of aggrandizement or cruelty and accept those undertaken to punish

evil, secure peace, and uplift the common good. That is exactly what Israel is doing.

Israel is being accused of committing genocide in Gaza. Yet the Israeli army is probably the most moral, humane army in history. They are going far above and beyond any normal measures to ensure there are minimum civilian casualties.

At the same time, if you look at Hamas and read through the Geneva Conventions on warfare, Hamas has broken every single rule in the book, every principle of warfare. They are using their own people as human shields, not protecting them but rather exposing them to harm. They are misusing humanitarian institutions, like hospitals and schools. They are torturing and raping people and vandalizing property, all of which can be seen in the videos from October 7. It is scandalous, and yet the international community is not holding Hamas accountable.

So, what does the Bible actually say about war? In a way, the most powerful passage about war is in the “Song of Moses” in Exodus 15:3: “The Lord is a man of war,” a statement that contradicts many of our religious assumptions about God as a peacemaker. Yet the Bible clearly

The Israeli army regularly drops leaflets in Gaza with warnings in Arabic for civilians to move to safe areas ahead of ground operations. (Flash90/Abed Rahim Khatib)



states He is a man of war. And in context, it is speaking of a real battle fought with real weapons, with real men being killed. God actually was fighting to annihilate an entire enemy army.

Psalm 24 also says that “the Lord is mighty in battle.” This psalm of David is about a very real war experience.

Then the Bible gives us the names of the Lord, and the most common is *Adonai Tzva'ot*, meaning the “Lord of Hosts” (or “Armies”). The Lord is called this 232 times in the Bible. Some might say this is all Old Testament, but the same word is used at least two or three times in the New Testament. And remember, in Hebrews 13:8, the Bible says Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forevermore. God always remains the same.

If you still think this is all Old Testament, read Revelation 19:11:

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.

In addition, the apostle Paul teaches in Romans 13:1–7 that earthly governments carry the sword as “God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.” Thus, the New Testament does not shy away from governments using military force in a just war but instead supports it.

Of course, as believers, we are not called to engage in physical battles because the church does not have a nation with an army. But it is a different reality for the restored nation of Israel, which has no choice but to defend itself against evil aggression. 🌐

Adapted from Dr. Buehler's presentation on the concept of a “just war” at the ICEJ's recent International Leadership Conference (ILC) in Helsinki.

ICEJ WARNS THE WORLD COURT “DON'T DIVIDE THE LAND OF ISRAEL!”

BY SHANNON BENNETT, ICEJUSA COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

In 2022, 87 member nations of the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution asking the World Court to present an advisory opinion on Israel's administration of East Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. Not surprisingly, this raised grave concerns not only in Israel but in the Christian community worldwide for several reasons:

1. Only 87 nations supported the resolution requesting the advisory opinion, with a vast majority of nations either voting against, abstaining, or absenting themselves.
2. The questions posed were completely biased against Israel.
3. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation was allowed to submit a legal brief delegitimizing the very existence of the State of Israel since its rebirth in 1948.

In response, in early July, 800 Christians from 45 nations gathered in The Hague to express their support for Israel based on biblical, historical, and legal grounds and caution the Court against dividing the land of Israel in light

of the prophetic warning found in Joel 3:1–3. This warning was encapsulated in a document entitled “The Decree” submitted to the Court on July 4.

Shortly thereafter, ICEJ USA launched a campaign to provide American Christians the opportunity to add their signatures to The Decree. ICEJ's Canadian Branch quickly joined forces with their American counterparts, and together, the two branches gathered over 1,000 signatures within just a few days. Once tallied, it was clear the desire to speak out was a global one, with citizens of 25 nations adding their signatures to The Decree.

On July 18, ICEJ forwarded the supplemental version of The Decree to the President of the World Court with a letter stating:

The signatories represent tens of millions of Christians worldwide who stand with the Jewish people's 4,000-year-old claim and connection to the Land of Israel. It would not be just or fair for the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to be allowed to

present its annihilist view on the very existence of Israel while an even larger global Christian constituency is ignored. In our eyes, the modern-day Jewish restoration to their ancestral homeland is the greatest example of historical justice in the entire course of human endeavors. We urge you to consider the enclosed submission seriously.

Sadly, the Court ignored the warning and released its advisory opinion stating that Israel's “occupation” of Palestinian territories is illegal—and thus, Israel's settlements there (in Judea, Samaria, and eastern Jerusalem) are illegal, too, and should be withdrawn as soon as possible.

Those who esteem God's Word should not fear for Israel but for the members of the Court and nations involved in delivering this opinion. God is faithful to His Word and has promised to ultimately deal with those who come against Israel or attempt to divide His land. To all who added their signatures to The Decree, know that your obedience was recorded in heaven. 🌍

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WILL THE
WORLD COURT
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THE LAND?

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Stand with the Jewish People Against Rising Antisemitism



We are battling antisemitism in communities all over America. Since October 7 we have criss-crossed the nation defending Israel and the Jewish people by organizing rallies, speaking at events, conducting media interviews, and debating the opposition every chance we get. We sent a letter to over 300 universities asking them to better support and protect their Jewish students from antisemitic attacks. We asked the Biden administration to clamp down on federally funded campuses that allow antisemitism to run rampant.

But there is so much more we need to do! The Jewish community is asking us to mobilize Christians in this battle.

Please help us organize an army of Christian activists and educate the American people with truth to counter the lies and deception of the terrorist's sympathizers in America.

**We need
\$100,000
immediately
to help offset
these critical
needs.**

Will you help?



DONATE TODAY AT
www.icejusa.org/stopantisemitism

FOR MORE INFORMATION
call 615-895-9830

THE LONG ROAD TO RECOVERY FOR THE GAZA BORDER COMMUNITIES

BY NICOLE YODER, VICE PRESIDENT FOR AID & ALIYAH

It's been more than nine months since Israelis in the Gaza border communities were overrun by Hamas terrorists last October 7, and they still do not know what hit them. Life has been one big fog ever since.

For Israelis in general, many of their core beliefs were shattered. Israel is supposed to be a haven for world Jewry, where there are no pogroms. If Israelis do get in trouble, the IDF will come and rescue them, like at Entebbe.

That all changed last October, and Israelis see worrisome signs of more trouble and uncertainty ahead. Hamas is battered but still holding on in Gaza. Many hostages remain in captivity. The northern border could still explode. Antisemitism is rampant around the globe, and it seems few in the world truly care about the Jewish State and people.

Thankfully, there are millions of Christians who care for Israel, and many have been expressing their love and support through the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem. Our AID team has been spending much time listening to the leaders and residents of the Gaza border communities to assess where they are and how we can help them on their long road to recovery.

For instance, we recently met with Yossi Keren, head of the Sha'ar HaNegev Regional Council, who served under the previous mayor (and our friend) Ofir Libstein—the first named casualty of this war. Yossi explained how the government has set up a special budget to help Gaza border communities rebuild to what they had before October 7 but added: “We want to build back better. We owe it to our children to plan and develop for their future and not just rebuild what we lost.”

Next door in the Sadot Negev region, security chief Rafi Babian also has the children in mind:

“Our lives will return when our children can return safely,” he told us. Rafi noted that most communities away from the Gaza border are slowly returning to normal, but dozens of families from his hard-hit home village of Kibbutz Alumim do not want to return for at least another year. The residents managed to kill 38 terrorists along their perimeter fence but lost 23 foreign workers, and the palpable tension people felt from being surrounded on all sides that day lingers.



Friends and family plant a tree for Liraz Assulin near the spot along the Gaza border where she was murdered by Hamas terrorists in the October 7 massacre. (Flash90/Chaim Goldberg)

Further south, the Eshkol Regional Council suffered the worst during the October 7 massacre and is struggling the most to get families to return. Among the Eshkol region's 33 communities, which includes the devastated villages of Be'eri and Nir Oz, 219 residents were murdered and 121 were taken hostage; 54 are still held in Gaza. In a sense, October 7 is not over for many of these families.

Going forward, our friends in the Gaza periphery are asking for our help with certain key areas as they recover and rebuild. This includes:

EDUCATION: Currently, there are not enough school staff and no security fences around the schools. Classrooms are crowded, and many children and staff remain traumatized. We have been asked to help sponsor children's informal educational activities, which provides parents

rest and frees them up to find work and think about the future.

EMPLOYMENT: As a result of what happened on October 7, many local businesses have failed. Evacuated families may soon start to lose their benefits, and many are living too far away to reach their former jobs. They need help to return to work and restart their businesses.

TRAUMA CARE: The Eshkol region alone has seen a tenfold increase in the number of patients needing trauma care, from 300 people per month before the Hamas invasion to 3,600 patients per month today. Far more trained professionals are needed, as local social workers are fighting over every therapist.

FIRST-RESPONSE: Every community is urgently upgrading their first-response teams. They are changing how they operate, doubling patrols, and seeking newer equipment.

REBUILDING: The government has set up the special “Tekuma” fund for rebuilding battered communities, but there are delays and bureaucracy to overcome. Presently, these plans remain on paper only, with much discussion but no movement. The communities are asking for help to get started on their own.

AGRICULTURAL EQUIPMENT: We are being asked to help replace farming tractors and tools that Hamas burned and destroyed.

Please partner with the ICEJ as we continue helping the Israeli border communities near Gaza overcome the immense tragedy of October 7 and rebuild their lives. 🌍

Donate today at:
www.icejusa.org/crisis

ICEJ DONATES PARAMEDIC KITS TO SADOT NEGEV REGION

BY ICEJ STAFF WRITERS

On a recent visit to Israel's south, ICEJ's Senior VP and International Spokesman David Parsons and VP of AID and Aliyah Nicole Yoder met with Rafi Babian, the security chief of the Sadot Negev Regional Council and one of the Israeli heroes amid the Hamas terror invasion last October 7. After Rafi's traumatic experiences that harrowing day, he urgently requested paramedic kits for all 16 communities under his watch, and the Christian Embassy was honored to donate these kits on behalf of our donors.

Rafi has many roles as a licensed ambulance driver, trained paramedic, firefighter, and policeman, and on that "Black Shabbat," he needed all those acquired skills. When the first massive barrage of rockets landed early that morning, he initially thought it was a routine rocket attack. But as he quickly left his community and a house full of holiday guests in Kibbutz Alumim to report for duty, he was surprised by heavily armed terrorists on the surrounding roads.

With battles raging all around and many of his region's communities on fire, Rafi led his first-responder teams in bravely entering dangerous areas to evacuate civilians and aid the wounded. The scene was heart-wrenching as wounded (and some badly burned) people, as well as the deceased, were brought to a central point for treatment and evacuation. Some were beyond help and even hard to identify.

"The only thing I could do for those caring for the wounded was offer the paramedic kit from my truck and a small first aid kit," Rafi said. "I am comforted to know that even these meager supplies saved lives."

Yet despite their best efforts, Rafi and his team could only do so much. Lacking stretchers, they improvised by loading mattresses from nearby houses onto wagons borrowed from local farmers to evacuate the injured.

Apologizing for the emotion in his voice, Rafi stressed why he had asked us for help in procuring more paramedic kits: trained professionals like him could use the kits to save more lives. The kits come packed with specialized airway tubes, suction equipment, IV infusion setups, and many other items crucial for treating the severely wounded.

"These medical supplies were sorely needed. We prepare for the worst but hope that another October 7 never occurs," Rafi said, his voice cracking from the painful memories that are still fresh. "Thank you so much for your donation. We truly appreciate it—and even more for the emotional support in times of crisis [like] the encouraging phone calls to check in on us."

"Though many families aren't sure if they will return, I hope we may meet again when the flowers bloom and the children return to our communities," he added.

Kibbutz Alumim

Kibbutz Alumim, located in the Sadot Negev region, was among the many communities whose members fought hard for survival against the terrorist onslaught that day. This area has shown remarkable unity and resilience. In Alumim, the community members defended themselves for over seven hours without any IDF assistance, eventually taking out 38 Hamas terrorists. Sadly, 22 of their foreign workers lost their lives.

In May the community held a Memorial Day ceremony where the foreign workers had lived on the kibbutz, which included prayers in Hebrew and Thai, a traditional Jewish song of belief in the Messiah, and HaTikvah, Israel's national anthem.



Rafi Babian, the security chief of the Sadot Negev Regional Council, with a medical kit generously donated by ICEJ donors

Contemplating the situation in Israel, Rafi said:

Though I am not well-versed in Christianity and Islam, I have studied them somewhat. ... I remember praying alongside representatives of all three religions in one of our burned fields a few years ago when the fire balloons were coming over the border and setting our farmland ablaze. I fervently hoped our prayers for peace would be heard. Today I am unsure if true peace will ever come, but I cling to the hope that we can leave a better world for our children. Prayer sustains me. Without faith, I would be utterly lost.

As our meeting ended, Rafi shared that he was finally going to speak to a trauma counselor about what he went through on October 7. "Since that day, I haven't spoken about what I witnessed as people were evacuated. It's time to process the past so we can build the future," he confided.

We invite you to join us as we work with our Israeli friends to help them recover and rebuild their lives. 🌍

Donate today at:
www.icejusa.org/crisis

ICEJ ASSISTS EVACUATED ISRAELI YOUTHS FROM NIR OZ

BY MARELINKE VAN DER RIET
ICEJ PUBLICATIONS ASSISTANT

The small Israeli farming village of Nir Oz, home to some 400 residents, was devastated by the horrific events of October 7, which profoundly impacted life for their community. On that tragic day, 100 kibbutz members were either killed or taken hostage in nearby Gaza by Hamas terrorists, who also destroyed a staggering 80 percent of the homes and pillaged the kibbutz. Currently, 37 residents remain hostages, though sadly, at least 10 may no longer be alive, including the Bibas family.

The remaining community members were quickly evacuated to hotels and only recently were relocated to temporary housing in Kiryat Gat, a city in southern Israel. They will reside there until their beloved community of Nir Oz can be rebuilt.

The Kiryat Gat municipality has generously provided space for



This club space will hopefully serve as a healing environment where the youth can come together, have good, clean fun, and forge strong bonds after all the traumatic experiences they endured. 🌍

kibbutz members to continue their communal activities, including facilities for their children, such as kindergartens and a youth club. Thanks to a generous gift from ICEJ Canada, the children recently participated in a woodworking and furniture-crafting project, which brought joy and fun to the youth and enabled them to create furniture for their new clubhouse—another bright, safe space for them to meet.

“In these challenging times, when so many families are still grieving and worried about loved ones being held hostage to this day, the community ties are more important than ever,” explained Nicole Yoder, ICEJ Vice President for AID & Aliyah. “The chance for the youth to enjoy fun activities strengthens them and frees parents to deal with other pressing concerns. This gift tells them that they are remembered and cared for—and that feeling of being noticed makes all the difference. We are so thankful to our friends for making this possible.”

Please give to:
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ALIYAH SUMMER CAMP IN LATVIA

BY HOWARD FLOWER,
ICEJ ALIYAH DIRECTOR

The first ICEJ-assisted Aliyah summer camp of the year was held in Latvia in late June, led by 23 camp counselors from Lithuania, Estonia, Ukraine, and Israel who

had trained in Poland earlier this year with the ICEJ's support. Of the 95 children who attended the camp, 35 were Ukrainians from Warsaw, Germany, Finland, Lithuania, and Estonia, plus local Jewish kids from Latvia and Lithuania. A Jewish component was woven throughout the entire program, including exploring various Jewish stories, values, and topics related to the Jewish Bible.

The camp also included an Israeli program that incorporated Jewish and Israeli content by teaching about the Kingdom of Judea, the creation of modern Israel, Aliyah, Israeli cities and landscapes, conflict resolution, and startup culture through examples of Israeli companies. One special day was dedicated to Israel, where all activities were related to the country. 🌍



SURROUNDED BY HELP

A Hebrew Word Study

BY MELISSA BRIGGS



“Surely God is my Help; the Lord is the one who sustains me.” (Psalm 54:4)

As Israel continues to face numerous trials, God is her constant hope and help: “As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds His people both now and forevermore” (Psalm 125:2).

Despite what modern culture says, it is not a badge of honor to be self-reliant and independent. God always intended Israel—and each of us—to rely on His help to draw us into a deeper, dynamic relationship with Him and show forth His power and mercy.

I used to feel the pressure to manage so much of my life on my own. And I wrongly saw God standing at a distance judging my performance. Often, I would feel overwhelmed with the idea that I might not be able to cope with all the plates I was spinning. I feared that I would drop the ball on the important roles and responsibilities God had entrusted to me. But God used the little Hebrew word עֵזֶר (*ezer*, or “help”) to change my perspective.

“God never gives you more than you can handle.” Have you ever heard this unbiblical platitude (a misquoting of 1 Corinthians 10:13)? Sadly, it gets passed around in faith communities and breeds an incorrect understanding of God—and our own abilities.

This is what I have found to be more accurate: “God definitely will permit in your life more than what you can handle on your own. But God is also ready, willing, and able to help you with it all, whenever you ask Him.” The spaces and places where we see our own limitations are conduits for blessing because they point us toward God (see 2 Corinthians 12:9–11).

A “Stone of Help”

Like the Israelites, I could set up a memorial stone of “Ebenezer” – meaning “stone of help”—to proclaim, “thus far the Lord has helped [me]” (1 Samuel 7:12).

God’s help is so near and accessible. All we must do is recognize our need for Him, then ask for His *ezer* in humility and faith. The psalmist wrote in 46:1, “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help (*ezrah*) in trouble.” I can always call on Him, and He is not annoyed or disapproving when I do. “You are my help (*ezer*) and my deliverer; Lord, do not delay” (Psalm 70:5).

The verb form of *ezer*—עָזַר *azar*—gives us understanding into how God helps us: He surrounds us, supports us, and aids us, especially in difficult times. Another noun, also in the same family of Hebrew words sharing the same root letters, is עֲזָרָה *azarah*, meaning “enclosure.” How beautiful to picture the Lord surrounding us as an enclosure—a powerful *ezer* on every side! “You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance. ... The Lord’s unfailing love surrounds the one who trusts in him” (Psalm 32:7, 10b).

God wants us to ask Him for help, and He answers when we do—though it often is in ways we do not expect. He will not always save us from hardships, but He will look after us through them.

The Almighty Lord is certainly surrounding Israel through this difficult season to bring her His powerful help, healing, protection, and comfort. (May we be available to Him to help in this holy work!) 🌍

***I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my ezer come from?
My ezer comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.”
(Psalm 121:1)***

Scripture taken from the New International Translation.

Melissa Briggs is an experienced Hebrew teacher passionate about making the riches of the Hebrew language accessible to everyone. Use coupon code “ICEJ” for \$50 off the cost of her Level 1 or Level 2 Hebrew courses. (An additional \$30 will be donated to ICEJ for each use of the code.) Melissa’s Explore Hebrew Courses for Beginners are a unique blend of biblical and modern Hebrew taught from a Christian perspective. Learn more at: www.iceju.org/p/explore-hebrew

HOMECARE OFFERING COMFORT IN FEARFUL TIMES

BY CORRIE VAN MAANEN
ICEJ AID HOMECARE NURSE



More than 28 years ago, the ICEJ launched its Homecare ministry to work among the arriving wave of Russian Jewish immigrants following the collapse of the Soviet Union. It has always been something of a hidden work, undertaken with love to fulfill the founding mandate of the Christian Embassy to “Comfort, comfort My people!” (Isaiah 40:1).

Over the years, the Homecare program has experienced different seasons, including difficult times of intifadas and wars and a pandemic that caused loneliness and fear for many.

However, the heart of the work has stayed the same: to visit the poor, the sick, the elderly, the disabled, and single mothers and be a part of their lives, see their needs, and provide help. Often, we simply come alongside them in difficult times.

A Visit with Tanya

Recently, the streets of Jerusalem were packed with mostly young people who traveled from across Israel to celebrate the city’s reunification in 1967. Despite the ongoing war, they were dancing and waving Israeli flags, and their joy felt like a tangible spirit of hope.

I found my way through the crowd that day to Tanya’s apartment. Her kitchen was small and rather dark. She made a cup of tea for both of us and was happy to see me because she had been feeling down and unwell. She seemed unaware of the singing just outside her apartment and began talking.

“I never thought that my life in Israel would be so difficult. I never had such troubles in the years I lived in Ukraine. To make Aliyah has been so much different than I expected,” she shared.

I tried to bring some perspective, saying: “But there you were so much younger. Don’t you think the years make a difference?”

“No,” she replied. “Here in Israel ... with the lengthy, ongoing war, the hostages, there seems to be no light yet at the end of the tunnel, no hope. But most difficult for me is the ‘noise’ the world makes against Israel, the widespread antisemitism.”

I understood her completely. The war is difficult for everyone in Israel, and, in many ways, a challenge to maintaining hope and faith. I offered

some rays of hope, and when we were nearly finished with our tea, she spoke again.

“In spite of everything, this is my home. I belong here, and I am thankful to the God of Israel.”

I stepped out of her house. The sun was warm, the sky a bright blue. I could hear the singing coming from Jerusalem, as the Hebrew prophets had foretold—a reminder of the faithfulness of the God of Israel.

Bringing Comfort by Being Present

Late one night, I received a phone call from a caregiver asking me to come to an elderly gentleman’s apartment I visit weekly.



He is 98 and blind, and ever since the war with Hamas started, he has relived the nightmare of the Second World War, which he survived as a boy. He had been imprisoned in the hellish Pechora concentration camp in Ukraine, which inflicted trauma that has followed him like a shadow his whole

life. Whenever I bring him his weekly groceries, we always enjoy a chat. These past months, though, he has seemed tormented at times—confused and fearful.

I slipped through the darkness of Jerusalem to his house, and together with the caregiver, we got him to bed. No words calmed him—fear is his reality. It was early morning before he finally fell into a deep, restful sleep.

I felt privileged to sit in this man’s room until his breathing deepened and slowed. The new day would begin in a few hours, and with the morning sunrise, things would seem different. But in those dark hours of the night, he was not alone and knew I was there with him—and for him, it was enough.

Homecare has entered a new season of its work, but our quiet, hidden outreach to the sick and disadvantaged continues, albeit amid a prolonged war. Please join us in this work as an army of caring and praying believers who stand in the gap for these precious Jewish people. 🌍

Donate today at: www.icejusa.org/homecare



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Newly arrived French immigrants upon their arrival at Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv, Israel



ICEJ BRINGING MORE FRENCH JEWS HOME TO ISRAEL

France's Jewish Community Alarmed by Antisemitism, Recent Election Results

BY HOWARD FLOWER, ICEJ ALIYAH DIRECTOR

Following the surprise success of leftist parties known for their antisemitic views in the recent French national elections, the Jewish community in France is increasingly anxious over their future in the country. Many Jews now realize the time has clearly come to make Aliyah to Israel. In response, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ) has committed to bringing more French Jews home on Aliyah flights to Israel.

The New Popular Front (NPF), a left-wing alliance featuring Jean-Luc Mélenchon and his “France Unbowed” party, made shocking gains in the second round of French voting in early July, leaving them as the largest bloc in the new national assembly. Mélenchon, the country’s



French leftists celebrate recent election victory by waving Palestinian flags (screen capture from YouTube)

most prominent far-left politician, is notorious for his antisemitic remarks, celebrating anti-Israel protests, and his recent vow to recognize a Palestinian state.

The impact of the elections on many French Jews was immediate—within 48 hours after Sunday’s vote, some 2,000 immigration files were opened with the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI) office in Paris.

“It is clear today that there is no future for Jews in France,” Chief Rabbi Moshe Sebbag of the Grand Synagogue of Paris said on Monday, as reported by *The Jerusalem Post*. “I tell everyone who is young to go to Israel or a more secure country.”

“People and parties entered the French Parliament who support Hamas and antisemitism,” added Knesset Member Oded Forer, chairman of the immigration committee in Israel’s parliament. “There is an important and dear Jewish community in France, and this is its time to make Aliyah to Israel. ... Within this threat, there is an opportunity to see a renewed return to Zion, and to rebuild what our enemies are trying to destroy.”

Antisemitism in France Spikes

In 2024 we have witnessed a major surge in antisemitic attacks in France, with a 1,100 percent increase following the October 7 Hamas terror invasion. In public schools, Jewish students are facing physical abuse, Nazi apologia, and vicious insults. This all underscores the urgent need for French Jews to finally come home to Israel.



Protest in Paris against antisemitism after the recent rape of a 12-year-old Jewish girl (screen capture from NBC News)

“Some 68 percent of French Jews report they don’t feel safe, so they’re looking for different options,” said Ariel Kandel, CEO of Qualita, an umbrella group for French immigrants in Israel. “The United States and Canada were options in the past, but many see the situation for Jews there has changed since October 7, and now think Israel is the true home of the Jewish people. People are looking for belonging, and Israel provides that for them.”

Studies show that 38 percent of French Jews are thinking about making Aliyah, which translates to roughly 200,000 people. Kandel noted that as many as 60,000 French Jews may be ready to move to Israel right now.

Recent data submitted by the Jewish Agency to the Knesset’s Aliyah Committee revealed that in its 2024 forecast, France’s projected Aliyah numbers ranged from 3,000 to 3,500, a marked increase from the

1,100 Olim (newcomers) last year. But those numbers are now expected to swell in the wake of the troubling election results.

At the halfway mark of 2024, the Jewish Agency estimates that the total Aliyah figures for this year could be up to 37,600, which would be a good year, especially given the ongoing war in Gaza. The Ministry of Immigration and Integration reports that 16,414 Olim have arrived in Israel so far this year, including 506 from France.

The Christian Embassy sponsored Aliyah flights for 100 of these new French Jewish immigrants this spring and welcomed 100 more in July. More are expected in August and in the fall.

“We have seen a very large trend of renewal of Aliyah files, as a kind of insurance policy by Jews around the world, so that whenever they want, they can make Aliyah to Israel,” explained Shay Felber of the Jewish Agency. “We are prepared to give a response to the high demand for immigration to Israel from France and around the world.”

As Jews return to their ancestral homeland—whether driven by Zionism, economic factors, or antisemitism—it reflects the fulfillment of biblical prophecy. Indeed, they are coming back to be planted in the Land of Israel, never to be uprooted again.

“I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them,” says the Lord your God. (Amos 9:15)

Please partner with the ICEJ by supporting Jewish families impacted by antisemitism in France who are embarking on their Aliyah journey—as well as those from other countries worldwide. Together we can make a meaningful impact, helping them embrace a future of hope and promise in the land of their forefathers. 🌍



French Jews say goodbye before flying to Israel (left)
French Jews on a flight to Israel (center)
French Jews welcomed in Israel (right)

Donate today at: www.icejusa.org/aliyah



YOUR ISRAEL ANSWER

Is Israel Using Famine as a Weapon of War?

By Dr. Susan Michael, ICEJ USA Director

After the brutal attack on Israel on October 7, lies about Israel that were already circulating before the war have intensified, and as the battle continued, new ones emerged. One is that Israel is using famine as a weapon of war. But are people in Gaza suffering from intentional starvation, and if so, is Israel the cause of their lack of water and food? Let's look some claims, and then uncover the facts.

Claim #1 – Israel Destroyed Gaza's Water Infrastructure

Hamas alleges Israel has destroyed Gaza's water infrastructure, which has resulted in limited availability of it—and the water they do have is salty or contaminated.

In reality, a water crisis existed in Gaza before the war started. There are no streams, lakes, or other bodies of water in the Gaza Strip, so its people rely on desalinization plants and Israeli pipelines (which were initially shut down at the onset of the war but quickly restarted and have continued to run since). Hamas claims Israel destroyed its northern pumping facility, but in truth, that pipeline was damaged in the October 7 attack—and Israel made great efforts to make repairs on its side and help the Palestinians fix it on theirs.

Claim #2 – Israel Is Starving Civilians

Palestinians also claim Israel is starving Gazan civilians as a method of warfare by blocking delivery of water, food, and fuel from getting into Gaza and destroying agricultural areas, making it impossible for them to survive. The media has grabbed ahold of this lie and ran with it, convincing the world Israel is using famine as a weapon of war.

But that narrative is also false. A June 2024 Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Famine Review Committee (FRC) of the Gaza Strip concluded that there is indeed a risk of famine in Gaza if inadequate dietary aid continues. However, in that same report, the IPC FRC determined there isn't enough reliable information to declare a famine (and the evidence they do have indicates there is not).

The report acknowledged that the amount of food entering Gaza has only increased over the past few months, not decreased, and says that nearly 100 percent of daily caloric requirements were met from March to April of this year. Before the war, 70 trucks carrying food entered Gaza every day, but from the start of the war until late spring 2024, that number increased to an average of 124 per day. *The Jerusalem Post* reports more than 35,000 aid trucks have entered Gaza since the start of the war. Sadly, much of the aid, including food, piles up for days or weeks on the Gaza side of the border because looting makes distributing it too dangerous.

Though the FRC acknowledges there is a possibility of death by starvation, the reality of determining whether that will actually happen because of the current situation in Gaza is impossible when Hamas fakes death numbers, and water and food availability is increasing.

Furthermore, a June 2024 *Jerusalem Post* article cites two Columbia University professors, Awi Federgruen and Ran Kivetz, whose research and analysis revealed that the people of Gaza are not starving. They say the amount of food being supplied to Gaza is “more than sufficient to feed all 2.2 million Gazans, according to what is considered a normal diet in North America.” Federgruen and Kivetz concluded the International Criminal Court (ICC), the United Nations, and Hamas are blaming Israel “for a famine that never was, hoping to stop the war.”

Conclusion

Starving civilians as a weapon of warfare violates International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), it is considered a war crime. But Israel is not intentionally starving Palestinians—rather, the Jewish State has been delivering more food to Gaza than ever before. If the United Nations were distributing it properly and Hamas wasn't hijacking it, the people in Gaza would have all the food they need. Undoubtedly, people are suffering in Gaza. But there is not a famine—and even if there were, we must place blame where it belongs: on Hamas. 🌐

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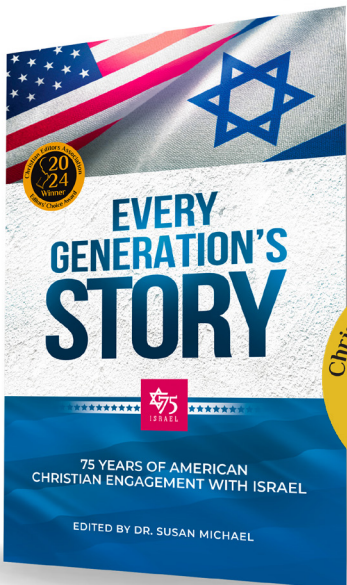
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Every Generation's Story was compiled and edited by ICEJ USA Director Dr. Susan Michael and copyedited by ICEJ USA Managing Editor Karen Engle.



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