

OCTOBER 7

A Year Later



CELEBRATE MESSIAH
NEW ZEALAND



Israelis seek answers after their loved ones were taken hostage.

We will not forget

Shalom, dear friends.

A year has passed since the most devastating assault on the Jewish people since the Holocaust. What makes this tragedy even more heartbreaking is that it occurred in Israel, a country founded as a haven of safety and peace for the Jewish people – particularly Holocaust survivors. Israel was officially established on May 14, 1948 – only three years after the Holocaust came to an end.

What took place on October 7?

Let us take a moment to recall the events of October 7, 2023. Hamas terrorists launched an unprovoked invasion from the Gaza Strip into Israel, committing acts of murder, rape, torture, and kidnapping – terrorizing innocent Israelis. The attack went far beyond a mere act of war, as the barbarity of Hamas' actions targeted innocent civilians, including children, the elderly, infants, Holocaust survivors, and the mostly civilian population of the kibbutzim around the Gaza strip. These were not just crimes against Israel – they were crimes against humanity.

Hamas claimed the lives of 1,200 Israelis, abducted 250 innocent individuals, and ignited what has now become an unceasing conflict in Gaza. As with all wars, countless innocent lives on both sides have been lost, and many remain displaced from their homes, even a year later. Thousands of Gazans have suffered because Hamas uses its own citizens – men, women, and children, as human shields, causing further pain and tragedy.

The hostages taken that day have endured unspeakable cruelty. Tragically, it is now known that more than one hundred of the hostages taken into Gaza have perished. Likely hidden deep within the tunnels of Gaza, others are still missing, leaving their families in agonizing uncertainty.

The fallout

The violence escalated on April 14, 2024, when Iran directly attacked Israel by launching rockets, missiles and drones at both civilian and military targets. This barrage terrorised Israelis as they awaited the impact, even though Israel and its allies were able to neutralise 99 percent of the attack. Iran's aggression heightened tensions, raising the possibility of a wider regional conflict.

Hezbollah also entered the fray, launching more powerful rockets and missiles from Lebanon, across Israel's northern border. Currently about 80,000 Israeli residents are unable to return to their homes due to the ongoing threats from Hezbollah. Meanwhile, a more insidious battle is being fought on a global scale:

antisemitism online and physical attacks on Jewish people worldwide have surged. In the past twelve months alone, antisemitic incidents have tripled outside of Israel. The attack by Hamas was fueled by deeply rooted antisemitism, which can be traced through a long history dating back to the Koran and early Islamic texts. It is likely this history of Islamic antisemitism, continuously fueled by Jew hatred from Islamic clergy that was the main influence behind Hamas' decision to commit such atrocities against innocent Jewish people last October. The truth is, groups like Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis, and other Iranian-backed jihadists both harbor and incite deep-seated hatred for the Jewish people.

Hamas brutally burned homes and slaughtered innocent Israelis.



Messiah, our ultimate hope for peace



Although the conflict remains unresolved a year later, it is important to pause and reflect on the original events of the October 7 tragedy, and, like the Holocaust, resolve to 'never forget'. We must also consider how we should address the growing global problem of antisemitism. May we draw strength to address these critical issues from our Messiah Jesus, both today and as events continue to unfold. He will one day reign as King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and Prince of Peace.

The prophet Isaiah wrote, "He will judge between the nations and will render decisions for many peoples; and they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war" (Isaiah 2:4).

The Bible teaches that the end times, as described by Jesus, will be marked by escalating wars and rumors of wars until He returns (Matthew 24; Luke 21; Mark 13). While we are horrified by the violence in the Middle East, we also look ahead to the day when God will bring lasting peace. One day, our Redeemer will return, bringing His kingdom of righteousness and peace. Until that day, we live by faith in hope (Acts 1:9–11).

Four lessons from the past year

1. Our commitment to Israel and Jewish People must be rooted in Scripture.

Our support for the State of Israel and the Jewish people should not be swayed by the news or political events. It is difficult to keep up with the ever-changing headlines or what our favorite news sources tell us. Rather than looking to the actions of the Israeli government or the United Nations, our focus should remain on the Word of God, which is unchanging and should guide our understanding of Israel's role in God's redemptive plan. The Bible is filled with teachings about Israel and the Jewish people, and it must remain our central source of wisdom to guide us as we "pray for the peace of Jerusalem" (Psalm 122:6).

Many Western Christians support Israel's right to defend itself and recognise Israel as the greatest ally in the Middle East. Therefore, many Christians view support for Israel as very important. These are good reasons to support Israel as an important ally. However, our support should be based on biblical principles, not just political ones. God's Word is the final authority on all matters, including the place of Israel in His plan (Genesis 12:1–3; Acts 1:6–8). We must understand the Scriptural rationale for our support for Israel and not merely rely on human wisdom.

2. The Intense Jew hatred, which existed in classical Islam, was greatly intensified on October 7 by the more radical Islamic jihadists.

Historic forms of antisemitism – used viciously against the Jewish people for hundreds of years before the creation of the modern state of Israel – are now repackaged in politically oriented, human-rights language to appeal to a new generation. While the foundational rhetoric hasn't changed, this repackaging appeals to the far left, the far right, and to Islamist extremism. These arguments seek to disguise the more easily detected tropes, conspiracy theories, and mischaracterizations that previously existed. Centuries of history attest to the severe limitations placed on the rights of Jewish people. Prior to Islamic influence, Jewish populations were forced to live in ghettos both in western Europe and eastern European settlements. Through strategic exclusion and containment, European governments sought to remove Jewish Influence from the mainstream. At the same time, the Arab world in North Africa and Spain sought to control the Jewish people politically by levying heavy taxes against them. Though Jews and Muslims lived peaceably together in many places throughout the Arab world, a Muslim sense of superiority permeated the culture. During these times, Muslim traditions began to spread, identifying Jerusalem as historically owned by the Muslims. Ongoing mis-characterizations – fueled by Muslim hatred toward the Jewish people – insinuates that the modern state of Israel is unfairly occupying Muslim land taken by the Jews. This message is proclaimed and reinforced in many aspects of Muslim culture through education in schools, teaching in mosques, and promotion throughout Arab social media. The effect of this ongoing propaganda about the State of Israel and the Jewish people undeniably led to the attacks on October 7, 2023. Such vitriolic rhetoric from religious and militant Islam, spread by Hamas, led to the dehumanization and genocidal actions that harken back to the seventh century, where Jewish people were butchered, raped, tortured, mutilated and burned alive.

Scenes of destruction punctuate Jerusalem's landscape.



The convergence of the Iranian Revolution of the late '70s in the East and the coincident rise of the hard left in the West, although very different in nature, had a common enemy. Both sought the destruction, or at least subjugation, of Western Civilization, Judeo-Christian beliefs, the Bible, and God Himself. In fact, the modern State of Israel became a common target for both movements. While the western world would have historically stood up for such an ally in the Middle East, the increasing influence of the new left in the West distanced themselves from Israel and all that it represented. This greenlighted the plans and intentions of the radical jihadists, thus deepening the problems faced by Israel. That the West was willing to look the other way instead of pushing back on the violence of these radicals only emboldened Hamas and other militant groups to grow and continue to arm themselves, imposing their radical views on otherwise non-violent Muslims without check. Thus, knowingly or otherwise, the inaction of the West facilitated the influence of militant Islam to gain the upper hand throughout the Islamic world, resulting in the horrific acts of October 7.



Our support for Israel must be based on Scriptural principles.

Regardless of how the conditions came to be, we who represent the very thing that radical jihadists hate, are called to love and to pray for them – even the most violent among them. We must remember that the only real hope for enduring peace in the Middle East, along with the protection of the values we hold dear, is the reconciliation that comes only by taking the Gospel to those who oppose us. Only the transforming power of a life surrendered to Jesus can change a person's worldview and cause them to love and care for the ones they once viewed as enemies!

3. The world's hatred toward the Jewish people originates with the evil one.

For us to understand and fully comprehend what is going on in the Middle East, we must recognise the spiritual battle we're facing: the source of antisemitism is Satan himself. Rightly referred to as "the oldest hatred," antisemitism has plagued the Hebrew people since God made his covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3). When God called Abraham and his descendants as His chosen ones, they became the focal point of Satan's wrath.

In Satan's war against God, he has sought to wipe out the people of Israel recognizing that according to the covenant, through Israel "all the families of the earth shall be blessed." In accordance with this promise, God would use Abraham and his descendants to deliver the blessing of the Scriptures, the Saviour and even salvation itself to the world (John 4:22). Furthermore, according to Matthew 23:39, Jesus will not return until the people of Israel call out from Jerusalem, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD." This will not only result in Satan's failure but his very demise. As such, it is essential that we recognise Satan's strategy to destroy the people of Israel, prevent them from dwelling in Jerusalem, and prevent them from coming to faith in their Jewish Messiah.

Antisemitism has many faces, but all the faces come back to the same thing: hatred of the Jewish people. If you accept the premise that anti-Zionism isn't the same as antisemitism, can you think of any other people group tied to a land where those people don't have the right to that land? Would it be correct to say that we don't hate Italians, we just reject the right of Italians to live in the land of Italy or defend the right to be Italian? That would be absurd. Likewise, whether the hatred stems from their nationality, their ethnicity, their race or their religion, when you single out the Jewish people in ways that you would not single out any other people group, you are engaged in antisemitism.

Paul reminds us "We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12).

Therefore, if Christians truly desire to take up arms against this enemy, we must recognise this as a spiritual battle and that the enemy is Satan, not people. In the same way, we must "gird our waist with truth," (Ephesians 6:14), recognising that Israel matters to God. This is essential today more than ever, in light of the growing antisemitism around the world. To live our lives according to the Scripture, we must oppose antisemitism in all its forms and show love to the Jewish people. As Christians, our love for the Jewish Messiah will lead us to oppose those that seek to destroy the Jewish people.

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Ephesians 6:12



We cannot stand by while the people of Israel remain under attack.

What took place on October 7 (continued from page 4)

4. Believers should demonstrate their love through action.

Albert Einstein once wrote: "If I were to remain silent, I'd be guilty of complicity." This Jewish scientist lived through the horrors of the Nazi period before being saved by the Allies. As Isaiah the prophet wrote: "For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not keep quiet, until her righteousness goes forth like brightness, and her salvation like a torch that is burning" (Isaiah 62:1).

If we are to be true to our calling and commitment to God's Word, we can't remain quiet while the people of Israel remain under attack. These are the people of

God, the apple of His eye, the earthly family of the Saviour Himself. If we love Him, we will also love them. You may say, "but what did they ever do to earn God's favour?" Good question! What did we do to deserve His favour? His love and His favour are attributes of His character, not of our (or Israel's) virtue. God declares this love for them when He says "I have loved you with an everlasting love," (Jeremiah 31:3). Malichi 3:6 says "I am the LORD, I change not." Jeremiah 31:35-37 states that until the sun, moon, stars and sea disappear, Israel will remain a nation before Him forever.

All racial hatred is wrong, yet when the Jewish people are attacked, too often people remain silent. In light of God's unfailing love, we are compelled to demonstrate love for His people. As Genesis 12:3 reminds us, "I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you." Let us be people of principle and conviction before the LORD, standing for what is right.

As we remember the events of October 7, we mourn with the people of Israel. May our faith be demonstrated by our actions as we speak up for the people of Israel and seek to bring true peace to our world through the Jewish Messiah.

Upcoming Events

Please join us at an event near you. For more information, contact admin@celebratemessiah.co.nz

Sunday, 6 October: 10 am and 1.30 pm
Patumahoe Community Church
South Auckland – with Zohar Gonen

Sunday, 6 October: 5.15 pm
Gateways Church Hibiscus Coast, Auckland –
with Zohar Gonen

Sunday, 13 October: 10 am
Rongotea Bible Chapel – with Nigel Christensen

Friday, 18 October: Sunday 20 October
Sukkot Celebration at Woodend Christian Camp,
Christchurch

Saturday, 26 October: Monday 28 October
The Return of the King of Kings (End times
teaching series), Good News Bible Chapel, Havelock
North – with Nigel Christensen

Saturday, 26 October: 10.00 am
Zion House Messianic Fellowship, Levin –
with Zohar Gonen

Sunday, 27 October: 10.30 am
Lifechangers, Levin – with Zohar Gonen

Sunday, 27 October: 10 am
Caversham Community Church –
with Michael Thomas



Order your 2024 - 2025 Messianic Art Calendar Now!

Our new 2024 - 2025 Messianic Art Calendar, **PRESERVING THE PROMISE**, tells the story of Jewish people in the land of Israel. From the promise given to Abraham, through exiles and returns, and then statehood - yes, even on October 7 - God's hand has been evident. As you peruse these pages, allow each story to give you hope in the faithfulness of Israel's covenant-keeping God.

This thirteen-month calendar follows **the Jewish year 5785**, includes weekly Torah readings, and notes major global holidays.

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Michael Thomas,
CMNZ director

**“If I were
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What Can You DO?

You can make a difference on a very practical level. Here are some effective ways that you can show your support for the Jewish people and the State of Israel today, individually and through your church:

Pray

As believers in Jesus the Jewish Messiah, we can pray for the Jewish people. Consider holding a special time of prayer for the Jewish people in commemoration of those lost, the hostages, and the families torn apart by the events of October 7th. Suggest that a few people from the church offer prayers during services on October 6th. Consider offering a gathering at the church or in your home to pray for Israel and the Jewish people. Also consider joining our ongoing Prayer For Israel meetings. While the prayer meetings have been going on nightly since October 6, 2023, many people choose to join for certain nights or on a weekly or fortnightly basis. To join these virtual prayer and in-person meetings, please contact PFI-NZ@celebratemessiah.co.nz.

Reach out

Support your local Jewish community to let them know you stand with the Jewish people by attending commemorative events in your area. Reach out as soon as possible to assure that you are aware of events well in advance. Many Jewish communities require pre-registration to participate in events.

Give

Please pray about donating support for the Jewish community or an Israel-related ministry such as Celebrate Messiah. Many Jewish community centres are seeking donations to help families in Israel who are in financial peril due to the war. There are many causes to support. Likewise, consider supporting a Christian ministry who focuses on bringing the Gospel to the people of Israel. Support these ministries as they share the gift of Salvation through the Jewish Messiah.

Participate

Throughout the country, there are churches, synagogues, community groups, and rallies that focus on showing support for the State of Israel and the Jewish People. Take time to become acquainted with others who share your concern and heart for the people of Israel. Celebrate Messiah will also keep an updated list of events on the Prayer for Israel portion of our website: www.CelebrateMessiah.co.nz.

Jesus once said, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27). Apart from the Prince of Peace, neither we nor the people of Israel will ever be able to experience true peace. So please consider supporting our ministry as we “bring the message of Messiah to the original messengers and equip the Church to do likewise.”

Blessings b’Shem Yeshua! (in the Name of Jesus!)

Michael