

## 40 Day update on the war in Israel

*Since its inception, Christian Ministry to Israel has worked with the Grace and Truth Congregation in Rishon le Tsion, Israel, as well as the closely affiliated publisher, HaGefen. Here is an update from this congregation.*

Dear Friends,

Almost 40 days have passed since “Black Saturday”, as October 7, the darkest day in the 75 years of our history as a state, has been named.

### Painful scars

More and more stories emerge each day to tell of the barbaric atrocities that the Hamas terrorists committed on Black Saturday. Babies were shot in front of their parents, grandmother and grandchild were tied together and shocked, and whole families were shot dead. Women were raped and killed, babies found in ovens, and bodies beheaded and burned so badly that even after a month some 70 bodies still have not been identified. There are now 239 hostages that include small babies, whole

families, the elderly, and a pregnant woman. After 40 days, none of their families or anyone else has heard any word about their whereabouts. Even the Red Cross has not been allowed to visit them or know of their condition.

Earlier today, the IDF spokesperson revealed that at least one of the hospitals was possibly used to initially hide some of the hostages. Not only the hospitals, but kindergartens and mosques have been used as operational centers for Hamas and underneath them they have built some of their centers and headquarters. Israel is fighting one of the hardest kinds of warfare. Not only are we fighting against a brutal terrorist organization, but we are doing so in the world’s most densely populated area.

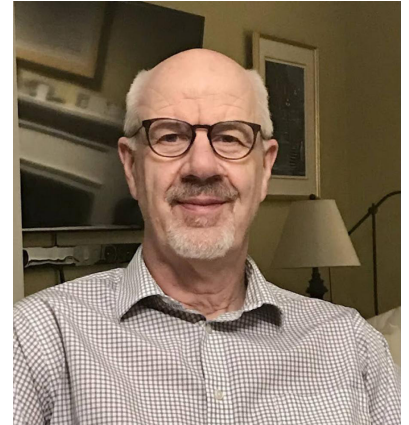
### Ongoing threats

As of now, there are approximately 160,000 Israelis who have been evacuated by the government, and tens of thousands have decided to leave their homes in light of the dangers. In our church, six families have been evacuated from their homes. In the city of Sderot, right by the border with Gaza, an entire church has been evacuated and the congregation divided into three different locations.

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## In Memoriam

On May 26, 2022, it pleased the Lord to call home brother Bert DeJong in his 69th year.



Christian Ministry to Israel was privileged to have brother DeJong serve on its board since its inception. In fact, he was instrumental in bringing to Canada his brother Johan de Jong, who served on da Costa Steunfonds Israel, a Reformed organization in the Netherlands that supports work in Israel. This visit led to the formation of Christian Ministry to Israel, in close relationship with da Costa Fonds.

For many years, until he passed away, Bert DeJong served as Chairman of the board, beginning meetings with fitting and edifying meditations on God’s Word and leading with clarity and gentleness. The board is thankful for how the Lord used him, misses his presence, and commends his wife, Luella, and his family to the Lord.

CMI Board



*Please subscribe to our newsletter or make a donation today at [www.cmisrael.org](http://www.cmisrael.org)*

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Another church in the north near the Lebanese border has also been evacuated.

In our congregation, around 35 soldiers have been drafted and are serving from the south to the north and in the West Bank. Other churches have a similar number of soldiers on the battlefield. Even earlier today, more missiles were shot down in central Israel, including Tel-Aviv and Rishon Le Tsion and even in Beer Sheva and Eilat in the south.

For five weeks, we could not conduct our worship services due to the missile threat and had to meet via Zoom. This past Saturday was the first time we could meet in person and participate in the Lord's Supper together. The worship and fellowship was sweet: *"I was glad*



destroyed home across from our congregants

*when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD" (Psalm 122:1).*

Currently, Israel is fighting on several fronts, Hamas in the Gaza Strip in the south, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Syria in the North, and the Hamas terrorists in central Israel in the West Bank. Even long-range missiles from Yemen have been shot toward Israel. The war cabinet and the government are determined to destroy Hamas and to make sure that Israelis in the south feel safe enough to return to their homes, although whole villages and Kibbutzes need to be rebuilt.

Another front where we have not been so successful is overseas' public opinion. Anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic sentiments are on the rise by hundreds of percentages. Once again in Europe and even in the USA, Jews are afraid to walk in the streets with any Jewish or Israeli symbols. In some cities, Jewish homes have been marked by Swastika and hate-filled demonstrations against Israel have been held in too many cities. The slogan "From the River to the Sea Palestine Will be Free" is being chanted at many of these demonstrations. What they are chanting is the annihilation and total destruction of the State of Israel because that is where we Israelis, Jews and Arabs live. We desperately need your help to not remain silent in this fight and show you support us. Many are reminded that during the Holocaust many churches and Christians remained silent, and we hope that today the church will not remain silent in light of the murdering and butchering of Jews in Israel or in any other place.

### **AFTER DARKNESS LIGHT**

By the goodness of God, there is always light after darkness. Even after the darkest nights, the dawn arrives, and light tears into the darkness. The testimony of our history and the big story of the Bible is that God always brings us out of the darkness into His light. Almost immediately after the horrible events of October 7th, the military and the whole country was mobilized and ready for the war that was forced upon us. Most of the reservist's units had 130-150 percent of their manpower show up, as everyone felt the call to save and protect their families and homes. The



government drafted some 350,000 men and women. Many flew back from overseas to join their units. Not only all the called reservists showed up, but also many civilians volunteered to help in the war effort.

Besides the many sad stories of the killings, there are many stories of heroes and civilians volunteering to help in endless ways. Some have been volunteering in the hospitals, bringing food for the families of those injured and hospitalized. Many restaurants are cooking meals and delivering them freely to various units. Some are helping in the fields and farms by picking vegetables and fruits and milking the cows. Many are helping families with children who are in bomb shelters, and yet others are donating funds and materials to the families who have been evacuated. The unity and support have been unprecedented, especially when just before October 7th, the country was divided over the various judicial changes.

Our church almost immediately set up an emergency fund to help with the many needs created by this war. We are very thankful for so many of you who sent us generous funds for this crisis. Through your support and that of the church, we have helped hundreds of families and many civilians. Some of these efforts



include preparing grocery packs for the needy, elderly and holocaust survivors and helping the displaced families and churches. We were able to purchase shoes, socks, and other basic clothing items and equipment for reservists. Many coloring pages and books were provided for families with children, many of whom were in the shelters for weeks. At different times, church members volunteered to harvest ripe vegetables in the fields. The church provided funds to various ministries who have and continue to help the many evacuees, and of course we have helped provide for the church in the south who had to be evacuated.

It seems that the war will continue for weeks and possibly months. The war with Hezbollah is becoming unavoidable in light of their aggression in shooting rockets and missiles toward civilians. Yesterday, an electrical worker was killed and several injured from one of the Hezbollah antitank missiles. The need to support the families who have been evacuated will continue to rise. We plan to help in any way we can.

Grace and Truth and pastor David Zadok personally thank each one of you for your prayers on our behalf, as well as your generous support of our war emergency.

Finally, as you pray for us, for the release of the hostages and for the safety of our soldiers, please remember to pray for the Palestinians in Gaza who are under the terror of Hamas as well.

## The State of Israel: 75th Anniversary

According to the Jewish Calendar used for official events, the fifth day of the month Iyar of the year 5708 is a very important day. On that day, May 14, 1948, the State of Israel was formally established in parts of what was known as the British Mandate for Palestine. David Ben-Gurion declared on that day:

*"The state of Israel will be open to Jewish immigration and to the coming home of our exiles. Israel will develop the country for the sake of its inhabitants, it will be founded on the teaching of freedom, justice and peace, according to the visions of the prophets of Israel,*

*it will promote the full social and political equality of all its citizens, without any distinction in faith, race or sex, it will guarantee the full freedom of conscience, religion, education and upbringing, it will hold dear the holiness and inviolability of the holy places of all religions, and it will be loyal to the principles, as written down in the Constitution of the United Nations."*



After the Jews had been banished from their homeland for close to 2000 years, the institution of the State of Israel was a wonder. Less than 24 hours after David Ben-Gurion declared Israel a state, the armies of Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq attacked Israel. This war became known as Israel's War of Independence. They were ill-equipped going into the war, not having a single canon or tank and only nine obsolete planes. With little help from Western nations, the Israeli people drove the Arabic troops back over a period of 15 months. This war took the lives of over 6,000 Jews or around 1% of the Jewish population of the time.

Since then, more wars have flared up and taken the lives of both civilians and soldiers. Israel is in a continual state of military readiness, which takes its toll on society. Amid all these challenges, the state of Israel continues to exist. More importantly, God's church and kingdom, which cannot be moved, continues to grow in Israel. What reason to continue to pray, "Thy kingdom come!", also in Israel.

## Russian Church Magazine – 37th Edition

Two years ago, the Russian edition of the "Grace and Truth" magazine began to be made available in digital format. This digital format allowed for it to be published in the Ukrainian language as well, since the editor, Zoya Sladek, speaks both languages.

The current edition includes:

1. A continuation of an "Introduction to Systematic Theology" by pastor David Zadok.
2. An article on Yom Kippur by elder Eitan Kashtan.

3. "Why Do We Do What We Do?" - An article based on a series of lessons on counselling taught by deacon Vlad Afanasyev as part of a Shabbat school.
4. "Talismans, Amulets, and Traditions" - An article based on a church women's group study led by Orit Kramer, a local Christian consultant.
5. "Being Like Children" by Arkady Sherba.

Christian Ministry to Israel continues to support the publication of this magazine.

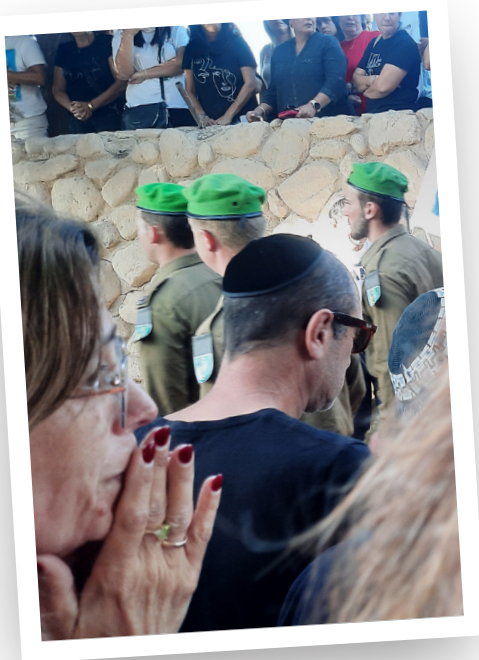


# News from the Negev Desert

*Christian Ministry to Israel has the privilege of giving support to Albert and Esther Knoester for specific projects. This couple, sent out by the Hersteld Hervormde Kerk, lives in Dimona, a town surrounded by desert in southern Israel. They have faced great local opposition to their Christian witness, as well as encouraging evidences of the Lord's work there. They have a Walk-in Café in the center of town where they meet many different people. Below is a recent update in the aftermath of the Hamas attack on Israel.*

Shalom dear friends,

Today is Day 43 of the war precipitated by the attack on the Kibbutzim on the Gaza border. Many still find it impossible to comprehend what happened. Every day, more stories emerge of the barbaric atrocities committed by the Hamas terrorists. The media here often say, "The pain is too heavy and too deep to express in words." Many children have also suffered trauma. A pastor of a congregation on the Gaza border now resides with his family in a Kibbutz near Jerusalem. Their children no longer dare to go to the bathroom alone out of fear of meeting Hamas terrorists in the hallway. We also heard of a child who was hiding under her bed from the terrorists, and since that Saturday has not dared to sleep in her bed but under her bed.



Every Saturday, we may gather in our home as a congregation, with elderly, adults, and children. We do not have separate children's services but involve them completely in the gathering. In our gatherings, we address the current situation in the country. The children draw pictures with words of encouragement such as "Be strong and courageous" or "I pray for you" or a text from the Scriptures. We take these drawings to a collection point in Dimona, where they are given to the soldiers as encouragement.

## **Mourning in Dimona**

The atmosphere around us remains charged. The other day, someone who is usually very articulate came into our house quietly with a depressed face. Immediately he started talking about the war. He wanted to tell his story and said, "I have friends who are now fighting at the front and in Gaza." He himself fought in the Lebanon war. He said, "I know what it is to fight at the front and see your buddies killed next to you." Friends of his were killed by Hamas on October 7 in a Kibbutz, where he had lived for a year in the past. He was very touched and could hardly hold back his tears. We are so grateful that we can then cry with him and stand beside him comfortingly. We can point him to God's promises, that the Keeper of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps, loves His people, and wants them to return to Him. This man loves us and says many times he sees us as his family. He knows that we believe in Yeshua (Jesus) and says he also believes that Yeshua is the Messiah. Please pray for him!

When we meet people on the street or in our Walk-in Café, we see depressed faces. Conversations soon turn to the hostages and soldiers – "our boys," they say. Everyone knows someone in the family who serves in the Defence Force (IDF). Most soldiers are between the ages of 18 and 21. One young lady of our congregation was also drafted. Soldiers have complex tasks to perform amid traumatic and dangerous situations. Recently a mother of six children came to us with sadness and fear in her eyes because four of her sons had to go to the front at Gaza and on the northern border near Lebanon.



So far, 368 IDF soldiers have died defending Israel. Among them were also two believing soldiers. A brother of a member of the congregation in Beersheva is seriously injured in the hospital. Every soldier killed on the battlefield leaves a family in deep grief and sorrow. Many young people are sacrificing their lives for the country.

A military death in your town leaves deep impressions. Sergeant Noam Yosef Abu from Dimona was killed in action in Gaza. We attended his funeral. As we approached the cemetery, people with Israeli flags stood as a guard of honor. Many locals were at his funeral. His coffin draped with an Israeli flag was carried by his battalion. It was poignant and heartbreaking to see and hear the deep sorrow of the family. His sisters cried out: "Lama, lama dafka ata (why, why, you of all people)! Come back! It's not true! Tell me 'I'm dreaming please!'" His mother broke down and she lamented in a choked voice, "Never again celebrating Sabbath where you, my love, are no longer with us is unbearable." During the ceremony, many could not hold back their tears. Many soldiers stood sobbing and staring at the ground. The land is united in sorrow, pain, and mourning. In these moments of mourning, our prayer is, "O Lord, deliver Israel from all its afflictions."

## **Courage and compassion**

We identify with the people among whom we may work, but that does not mean that we "hate" other people groups. We must have an eye also for the "other" side. That creates tension. While we deliver messages for the Israeli soldiers at the front, we also contact a Christian congregation in the so-called Palestinian territories. They too need prayer so that they can continue to point to the Prince of Peace.

One of them wrote: "Thank you so much, brother Albert". Your email means a lot to us in light of what all of us are facing. We also realize that your area is usually not safe, so we pray for you all. Thank you again for your kind email. My best wishes and blessings to the Source of Living Water Church. In Him!"

I (Albert) attended a National Day of Prayer with around fifty church leaders, including Jews, Arabs, and pastors calling themselves Palestinian. There were some "tense" moments. But it was so good to be together. After all, the Lord Jesus removed the dividing wall through His finished work. That is why one Arab pastor could say: "I hereby declare that I am one with my Jewish brothers!"

Several times we broke up into smaller groups for prayer. I was in a prayer group with a "Palestinian" pastor. He used to hate anything to do with Jews. Arafat was his employer. Now he was praying for the soldiers of the IDF, "Lord, God of Israel, give the soldiers the courage to finally deal with the Hamas in the Gaza Strip. But Lord, also give them a soft heart full of compassion when they meet people there who need a glass of water." There are not many Christians left in the Gaza Strip. Those who are still there need our prayers very much!

### **Nechama (Comfort)**

Certain words trigger you. One such word is the word "comfort." As a small child, we learned from the church's book of comfort, the

Heidelberg Catechism. The first question is: "What is your only comfort both in life and in death?" The answer begins with: "That I, with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Saviour, Jesus Christ."

On one of the Hebrew news programs this word "comfort" (Nechama) sounded in an interview with the mother of a young lady who was horribly murdered at the dance party on October 7. This mother was asked, "Now your daughter has been murdered. What is your consolation in all this?" Her answer was, "My consolation is that she danced to her death." Hearing that was mind-boggling. What a need there is for them to hear of the "only comfort in life and in death"!

We pray that many more will come to know the only real Comfort: To be owned by the Saviour. Children of God do not "dance" to their death. They may look forward to Him who said: "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

### **War-time Help**

We are grateful for the many initiatives in and outside the country. These initiatives show people in Israel that others care about them amid the alarming increase of anti-Semitism worldwide. One pastor wrote, "We desperately need your help by not remaining silent in this struggle and showing that you support us." Now is the time for Christians to step up to the plate and offer help as a testimony.

Esther has gone to a collection point that receives requests on behalf of soldiers. We have been given money to hand out so that we can be a blessing to Israel. Esther has gone shopping for the army with some sisters from the church. When they dropped these items off, the staff were visibly touched and wanted to know who they were.

We try to keep this aid small-scale as a church. The war may last a long time and will also have a great financial impact because of the thousands of reservists who have been called up and must leave their jobs. Therefore, we are keeping in touch with people



whose children or other family members are in the military. We are also in contact with people from a local organization which reaches out to poor families. We have also been able to help them with things that are really needed.

### **Walk-in Café**

We are grateful that the Walk-in Café can be a beacon of light and that people know how to find us. The day after the attack, a young man walked in. He was completely panicking and cried, "The terrorists have shot my brother." He made the gesture of a machine gun with his hands. He was so distraught he could not say anything else. I put my arm around him and we cried together. At this moment, we can "only" be there for them.

A Jewish woman came in, sat down, and started talking: "I can't eat and don't know how to go on." She could not process what happened. We asked if we could pray with her and she was okay with that. We were able to read some texts from the Bible and gradually she became calmer. She said she would come back. Another person came in and asked us, "Has the time of Gog and Magog begun now?" with fear written on her face.

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## News from the Negev Desert - continued from page 5

Even a secret believer who is afraid to be seen with us, now knows where to find us and comes in with many questions. She lacks spiritual food and is confused. Sobbing, she told us that she felt so guilty for not daring to live out her faith in Christ in front of her children and husband. She has many problems and worries and recounted that her brother-in-law (who is a rabbi) said, "If you get rid of that book (The New Testament) from your house, you and your family will do better, and you won't have any more problems." She said she had replied, "No,

I can't!" She is in a very difficult situation. A great spiritual battle is raging, not only for Israel, but also for souls. I was able to pray with her and encourage her!

"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem!" (Isa. 40:1-2). We long for the time they know the fulfilment of the second line: "and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned."



Warm greetings and Shalom!  
**Albert and Esther Knoester**  
November 18, 2023

## Will you pray ...?

1. for the government and military leaders to receive Godly wisdom in making plans and choices
2. for all the mourners who have lost loved ones
3. for the hostages and their families
4. for the protection of the Israeli military who must conduct life-threatening operations
5. for the Messianic soldiers to spread the Light
6. for the Lord to work with His Spirit so that Jews will cry out to God for salvation and protection
7. for the Lord to humble His people, that they will confess their sins, that their hearts will open for the Messiah, the Lord Jesus, that He will reveal Himself to them
8. for protection for Jewish people worldwide amid increasing anti-Semitism
9. for the situation in Gaza and the conversion of the people there
10. for the Christians in Gaza to receive relief in their distress
11. for the terrorists to be confused and confounded and realize that they are fighting not only against Israel, but also against the God of Israel. "And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD..." (Exodus 14:31a).

We may give thanks that the Lord rules and that things never get out of His hands. His plans and promises are fixed and are yea and amen in Christ!

We are grateful for all your compassion and prayers.

**Albert and Esther Knoester**

## CMI Financial Update

We are grateful for the gifts received for the various CMI projects this year. We still hope to fund several of the budgeted projects.

We are hoping to raise at least \$75,000 for Emergency Relief. These funds will be sent to support the relief work of the Grace and Truth Congregation, as well as Albert and Esther Knoester. If you wish to give to this project, please note that your donation is for "Emergency Relief."

### Please send your donations to:

John Wilbrink  
8 Weneil Drive  
Freelton, ON L8B 0Z6

Or visit our website [www.cmisrael.com](http://www.cmisrael.com) and use the donate button for an online donation.

E-transfers can also be accepted by sending an email to:

[John.Wilbrink@gmail.com](mailto:John.Wilbrink@gmail.com)

### Christian Ministry to Israel Statement of Receipts and Disbursements January 1 - November 15, 2023

	Actual YTD	Budget 2023	Variance
<b>Opening Balance</b>	\$ 143,914	\$ 143,914	
<i>Receipts</i>			
Donations - institution	\$ 37,333	\$ 80,000	\$ (42,667)
Donations - Private	\$ 55,604	\$ 125,000	\$ (69,396)
Miscellaneous Income	\$ 1,410	\$	\$ 1,410
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>\$ 94,347</b>	<b>\$ 205,000</b>	<b>\$ (110,653)</b>
<i>General Expenses</i>			
Office	\$ -	\$ 200	\$ (200)
Awareness raising	\$ 2,507	\$ 6,275	\$ (3,768)
Publications	\$ 1,045	\$ 2,100	\$ (1,055)
Fees	\$ 155	\$ 412	\$ (257)
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 3,707</b>	<b>\$ 8,987</b>	<b>\$ (5,280)</b>
<i>Project Support</i>			
P1: HaGefen Book Translation & Publishing	\$ 31,500	\$ 112,575	\$ (81,075)
P2: Grace & Truth Purim Packages	\$ 12,500	\$ 12,500	\$ -
P3: HaGefen Russian Magazine	\$ 8,000	\$ 16,000	\$ (8,000)
P4: HaGefen Study Centre	\$ -	\$ 20,000	\$ (20,000)
P5: Grace & Truth Holocaust Survivors		\$ 10,000	\$ (10,000)
P6: Reformed Pastors' Conference		\$ 5,000	\$ (5,000)
P7: Dimona Outreach		\$ 10,000	\$ (10,000)
P8: Budapest Outreach	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	\$ -
<b>Total Project Support</b>	<b>\$ 72,000</b>	<b>\$ 206,075</b>	<b>\$ (134,075)</b>
<b>Balance on hand</b>	<b>\$ 162,554</b>	<b>\$ 133,852</b>	<b>\$ 28,702</b>