

COVER STORY: Israel vs. Hamas

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Hamas formed in 1987 as a Palestinian rejection of Israel's right to a homeland; they combined Palestinian nationalism with Islamic fundamentalism that sought to establish another Islamic state. The First Intifada, the uprising of such beliefs, began in 1987 and ended in 1993. The Second Intifada began in 2000 and, by most accounts, ended in 2005. This is where our personal story with Gaza begins.

The Expulsion of Gush Katif

In August of 2005, on Tisha B'Av, my wife Christie and I were on the Israeli border of Gaza and Gush Katif (a bloc of 17 settlements in the southern Gaza Strip). We were ministering to families who were being forcefully removed from their homes by the IDF. This removal was the result of a disengagement plan initiated by then-Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon under tremendous pressure from the Bush administration, calling for a withdrawal of the IDF and dismantling of Israeli settlements in Gaza. As a result, we watched over 8,000 Israelis dragged from their homes in a forced eviction—the most painful thing we observed in Israel and remains the single most traumatic experience for us, simply as observers—until our visit shortly after October 7, 2023.

Following this withdrawal in August of 2005, Hamas took over the Gaza Strip in 2007, ultimately leading to the Swords of Iron War. This is the history of the conflict in the most recent and basic terms—but why should it matter to you as a Christian?

What You See Depends on What You Feel

“For our fight is not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places,” (Eph. 6:12, MEV). As believers, we can learn valuable lessons from this history and how the enemy takes advantage of us when we step away from the promises God has given us. We often struggle to walk in our destiny because we see the giants in the land and ourselves as grasshoppers, not our God-given identity as heirs and overcomers.

During the Hebrew Month of Tammuz, which often falls in July and August of the Gregorian calendar, we focus on the principle of the power of vision, for how we see ourselves and our circumstances, which directs our steps. Sight is a curious thing. We all can look at the same thing, yet what we perceive is unique to our life experience. It depends on the condition of one’s heart. If you want to see the good, you often see the positive aspects; if you have negative feelings toward something or someone, you see things from a pessimistic vantage point.

Tammuz 17 was when the 12 spies departed to spy out the Promised Land. All 12 men went on the same journey and saw the same thing with their physical eyes, but their interpretations and understandings were completely different. Ten men saw giants who devoured one another, ignoring the good of the land that flowed with milk and honey, disregarding the gift of Hashem (“the name” in Hebrew, a title used for God). Two men saw the abundant harvest, recognized the richness of the opportunity and trusted God was “well able” to lead them to victory.

A Seer Has Great Power Over What He Sees

According to Jewish scholars, when the spies saw “a land that devours its inhabitants,” they saw the occupants turning on each other, creating a distraction and an opportunity for the

land to be taken (Mark 3:25). Instead of seeing this diversion as a tool in God's hand, 10 spies sinned with their sight and brought back a bad report of fear. Ultimately, this report was linked to a heart condition that lacked trust in God.

The Hebrew month of Tammuz represents sight. It is followed by the month of Av, representing hearing. When the children of Israel heard the bad report, they sinned by receiving and accepting it. Again, this sin was ultimately rooted in a heart condition and a wrong belief system. What you see, hear and believe is filtered through the state of your heart.

The Danger of a Wrong Belief System and Unknown Identity

"And it will be on that day that I will set Jerusalem as a weighty stone to all the peoples. All who carry it will surely gash themselves, and all the nations of the land will be gathered against it," (Zech. 12:3, MEV).

Anti-Semitism takes root in hearts that harbor wrong belief systems and struggle with their own identity. According to CNN: "Anti-Semitism 'skyrocketed' across the United States in the three months after the October 7 Hamas attacks on Israel...the ADL tracked a total of 3,283 anti-Semitic incidents between October 7 and January 7, the group said. This marks a 361% increase in reported anti-Semitic incidents." As Americans, we have witnessed an unprecedented rise in left-leaning college campuses nationwide, mimicking the radical activism of the 1960s. These mobs are calling for the annihilation of Israel while attacking Jewish students and faculty. The Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, said: "This is reminiscent of what happened in German universities in the 1930s. It's unconscionable. It has to be stopped."

Watchmen on the Wall

"I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem, who shall never hold their peace day nor night. You who remind the Lord,

do not keep silent," (Isa. 62:6, MEV). We must ask ourselves what the rise in anti-Semitism means for believers. I fear the enemy will use these sentiments to separate churches from the blessing of being rooted in praying for and blessing the nation of Israel.

If churches align themselves with an anti-Semitic belief structure in the name of humanitarianism or being politically correct, they will release the opposite of the blessings stated here. Therefore, we must choose to align our beliefs according to the Word and not according to our feelings or what is popular. There is no room in the body of Christ for replacement theology. Supersessionism, or replacement theology, is the belief that the church has fully replaced Israel and she is no longer the recipient of God's promises according to Scripture.

"For the sake of Zion I will not keep silent, and for the sake of Jerusalem I will not rest until her righteousness goes forth as brightness and her salvation as a lamp that burns," (Isa. 62:1).

Israel's 76th Year

The 76th year of the modern state of Israel may be one of her more challenging years as they continue defeating Hamas, searching for and rescuing 120 hostages, and preparing for possible war with Hezbollah in Lebanon.

We must turn our eyes toward Psalm 76:1-3: "In Judah God is known; in Israel His name is great. In Salem is His abode, and His dwelling place in Zion. There He broke the fiery arrows of the bow, the shield, the sword, and the weapons of war. Selah." Let's pray for Israel amid a challenging 76th year and pray for her continued safety and the safety of innocent people, as a war with Hezbollah in Lebanon could result in high casualties on both sides.

Same Enemy. Same God.

Since 1991, we've visited Israel more than 40 times. During our visit after October 7, 2023, we witnessed some of the most traumatic horrors and crimes against humanity we have ever seen. We visited the kibbutz, where innocent pioneering families were massacred. We visited the army bases in the south that our ministry has supported for years. We have seen the power of hate and anti-Semitism firsthand.

The enemy's evil desires toward God's chosen people met us face-to-face. Most concerning is the disconnect between our understanding as the body of Christ that the same enemy who did this to Israel is the same enemy that seeks to steal, kill and devour us.

It is the same enemy.

But it is also the same God.

The Chinese General Sun Tzu said: "Know thy enemy and know yourself." The body of Christ needs to remain awake and aware of the truth of the enemy we are facing.

Miraculous Intervention

Even amid so much loss, we also heard testimonies of families who saw miraculous intervention: lives spared, families saved, soldiers protected and people who saw the hand of God move on their behalf. The day we spent at Shiva Hospital in Tel Aviv was a day of testimony upon testimony of God's miraculous power. These IDF soldiers praised the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and expressed gratitude to Christians who pray for Israel and the IDF around the globe. They recognized the miraculous intervention.

Heart Posture of Prayer and Repentance

What can we do? Pray for:

> Israel

> The body of Christ

> The nations we call home.

Most importantly, I encourage you to embrace a heart posture of repentance and pray for God's mercy and the peace of Jerusalem: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: 'May they prosper who love you! Peace be within your walls and security within your towers!' For my brothers and companions' sake, I will now say, 'Peace be within you.' Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good," (Ps. 122:6-9, MEV).

May we take this summer season, the month of Tammuz and Av, to repent and turn our hearts back to the Father, embracing our true identity and unlocking covenant promises.

Curt Landry is the founder of Curt Landry Ministries and My Olive Tree. He and his wife, Christie, travel extensively, teaching about the Jewish roots of the Christian faith and the One New Man. Curt is also active in raising support for Israel throughout the evangelical community, as he desires to be a bridge of unity and restoration between Israel and the church. For more information about Curt Landry Ministries or to help support our projects in Israel and around the world, please visit .