

1 Year Later, Israel Is Still in Agony

One full year after Oct. 7, 2023, the nation of Israel is still traumatized and many of its people are still in great pain. One full year later, there are still scores of hostages languishing in Gaza, if not dead, and their families remain in daily agony. One full year later, the war with Hamas continues, but now there is also war with Hezbollah in Lebanon, as well as possible war with Iran itself. One full year later, rather than sympathy for Israel growing, it is hatred for Israel that is growing.

One year ago, the unthinkable happened on Israeli soil. A mass pogrom took place within the borders of this tiny state, the one place that was supposed to be safe for Jewish people. The nation's vaunted security systems failed miserably, and babies were slaughtered, women were raped, the elderly were executed and whole families burned alive.

I remember waking up the morning of Oct. 7 to the news that Hamas terrorists had flooded Israel and that as many as 100 Israelis had been killed. "Impossible," I thought. "Not today, in Israel. This cannot be." Then there were reports that several soldiers had been taken hostage. This, too, was unthinkable, with horrific potential consequences.

After all, Israeli Defense Forces soldier Gilad Shalit had languished as a hostage in Gaza for five long years before his release, which required Israeli releasing 1,027 Palestinian prisoners in exchange for his life—and one of those prisoners was Yahyah Sinwar, the mastermind of the Oct. 7 massacre. What would Hamas do with several Israeli hostages?

But as that dreadful day unfolded, the news was far more devastating than anything we could have imagined. This is what

I wrote one year ago as more reports came in:

Heartbreak. Shock. Agony. Devastation. Confusion. Rage. These are just a few of the emotions flooding the hearts of millions of Israelis in the midst of an unprecedented terrorist attack by Hamas. This is a time to stop and pray for the merciful intervention of God.

What makes this attack all the more insidious is that it comes almost 50 years to the day of the infamous Yom Kippur War in 1973. At that fateful time, Israel was attacked in the midst of 24 hours of prayer and fasting on the holiest day of the year, Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

The current attack, on Oct. 7, 2023, did not just come on Saturday, the Sabbath, but on what is called Simchat Torah, "the joy of the Torah," the greatest day of celebration on the Jewish calendar. This is the culmination of the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot), a day of singing and dancing and rejoicing.

But this day, instead of dancing there is wailing and mourning. Bloodshed has filled the land.

First there were reports of a limited number of casualties. Then shocking news of as many as 40 Israelis killed and 700 wounded. Then reports of more than 100 dead and 900 wounded. And the battles still rage as I write, with reports of Israeli soldiers taken hostage by Hamas.

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Only later did we learn that 1,200 were murdered, 3,400 wounded and almost 250 taken hostage. The mind reels at these numbers.

I had the sickening privilege of viewing the 47-minute film compiled by the IDF gathered from CCTV footage, the body cams

of the terrorists, and cell phone videos, including many from the victims themselves shortly before their deaths. I also visited the site of the Nova Music Festival as well as a large lot filled with hundreds of burnt vehicles, many of them also riddled with bullets. Just being at these sites and seeing the IDF footage was overwhelmingly painful—and all I did was glimpse from a distance the unspeakable agony of a nation.

Since that fateful day, more than 700 Israeli soldiers have died in battle, and every night, Israelis watch the news with dread, awaiting the news of the latest fatalities.

Then there is the burning salt that been poured into Israel's corporate wounds over these months, such as when the IDF accidentally killed three of its own people in Gaza, young men who had managed to escape from their captors, only to be shot and killed when they were mistaken for terrorists.

Or the news that as many as 20% of IDF soldiers killed have been the victims of friendly fire, so difficult is the warfare in Gaza.

Or the news that six Israeli hostages, men and women who had endured almost one year of hell, including a young man who lost a hand on Oct. 7, were executed by their captors as the IDF drew near, shot in cold blood in the back of the head.

Or the appalling reality that, one full year later, Kfir Bibas is still in captivity—he was only 8 months old when he was kidnapped by the terrorists. Also in captivity with Kfir is his older brother. He was just 4 years old when abducted.

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This is pure, unadulterated evil.

And all the while, a host from the Left and the Right deny

that any women were raped on Oct. 7. Or that any babies were killed. Or that any children were burned alive.

And all the while, Israel is accused of committing genocide against the Palestinian people and engaging in terrorist acts against the Hezbollah militants.

One full year later, the pain remains great and the nation is suffering corporate PTSD, even as it remains deeply divided, adding to the trauma. Even in America, Jewish students on campuses now feel unsafe—and for good reason.

Please pray for God's mercy on His people Israel and that He would somehow bring beauty out of ashes and life out of death. And, as much as my focus has been on the Jewish nation in this article, let us pray for God's mercy on the suffering Palestinians as well. They, too, are victims of militant, terrorist Islam.

Have mercy, Lord, and intervene!

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Dr. Michael Brown () is the host of the nationally syndicated *The Line of Fire* radio show. He is the author of over 40 books, including "Can You be Gay and Christian?"; "Our Hands are Stained with Blood"; and "Seizing the Moment: How to Fuel the Fires of Revival." You can connect with him on Facebook, X or YouTube.