

Why Christians Must Care About Israel's War With Hamas

Hamas formed in 1987 as a Palestinian rejection of Israel's right to a homeland; the terrorist group 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

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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 Israel Defense Forces. 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 Oct. 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

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“For our fight is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities ... 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.

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