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REPORT

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# IRAN BY PROXY

By **Shira Sorko-Ram**

**N**ot long after I arrived in Israel in 1967, I looked up my friend Elizabeth whom I had met while on a tour we brought to Israel. My mother, who regularly went on these tours, also met Elizabeth and thought she would be a good fit for Chuck Kopp who ran a Bible store in Jerusalem that his grandfather had established before Israel was birthed. My mother was right and soon after they were married. Like many couples looking for a nearby getaway, Chuck and Elizabeth decided to take a vacation in beautiful Lebanon.

At the time, tourists flocked Lebanon's natural beauty and historical sites. The Lebanese economy was known as a banking sector that attracted capital. Trade and services made it a key player in the Middle East. Lebanese of Christian background tended to be financially successful.

Lebanon was the one Arab country which elected a Christian as a ruling politician. In fact, back then, a whopping 55% of the Lebanese were traditional Christian Arabs from Maronite and other denominations. Sunni Muslims and Shiite Muslims were very much a minority.

Above: A billboard in Yemen depicts the leaders of the Houthis, Hezbollah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Iran's Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as all united for the same cause

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*Lebanon was known as the Switzerland of the East. When my friends returned, they said it was one of the most beautiful places they had ever seen.*

In fact, Lebanon was known as the Switzerland of the East. When my friends returned, they said it was one of the most beautiful places they had ever seen. It had a European feel, its citizens speaking Arabic, French and English. Though it had no relations with Israel, it was known to be a peaceful nation.

### Enter: Yasser Arafat

However, in 1969, soon after other Arab nations fought and lost the Six Day War with Israel, an Egyptian named Yasser Arafat, became chairman of a small militia called the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). He based himself in Jordan

and used that nation to launch terrorist attacks against Israel. His adopted country became very leery of his growing power among that nation's rural population. Finally, Jordan had enough, and expelled him and his militia. They relocated to Lebanon.

The Muslim population in Lebanon was expanding, and refugees—newly named 'Palestinians' by Arafat—poured into Lebanon. The



Yasser Arafat, 1977

Reuters

Lebanon was the Switzerland of the Middle East in the 1960's before Islamic forces took power

Switzerland of the East lost its Christian majority. For 15 years Lebanon suffered a horrendous civil war—between Shiites and Sunnis, Christians and Druze.

A number of Christian militias formed trying to protect their own from Muslims. And of course, the Muslim militias took every opportunity to attack Israel. Naturally, Israel fought back.

### Israel and the Christian Major

By 1975, the Lebanese Army began to disintegrate. A Maronite Christian officer, Major Saad Haddad, who became a born-again Christian, broke away with his brigade of about 2,500 Lebanese Christian soldiers, together with some Druze and even a few Muslims. He stationed his troops in the south, where his soldiers would protect some 150,000 Lebanese citizens from Muslim slaughter.

The price to hold this plot of southern Lebanon was brutal and Major Haddad and his troops began to



Ari and Shira with their two children visiting with Major Saad Haddad

bring their wounded to the border of Israel. He begged Israel for help. During that period, a third of the patients in Israel's northern hospitals were Lebanese. That border opening became famous as 'The Good Fence.'

By 1978, Israel had its fill of terrorist attacks from the Muslim militias led by Arafat and the PLO. The IDF invaded Lebanon and pushed the PLO back 18 miles to the Litani River, creating an 80-mile long buffer zone. Major Haddad's newly formed South Lebanon Army (SLA) became loyal allies, fighting alongside the IDF against the PLO.

But Arafat's PLO continued their campaign to destroy the hated Israel. Its constant attacks on the Jewish civilian population caused the IDF to invade Lebanon again in 1982 in alliance with several major Lebanese Christian militias. This time Israel forcibly expelled the PLO from Lebanon.

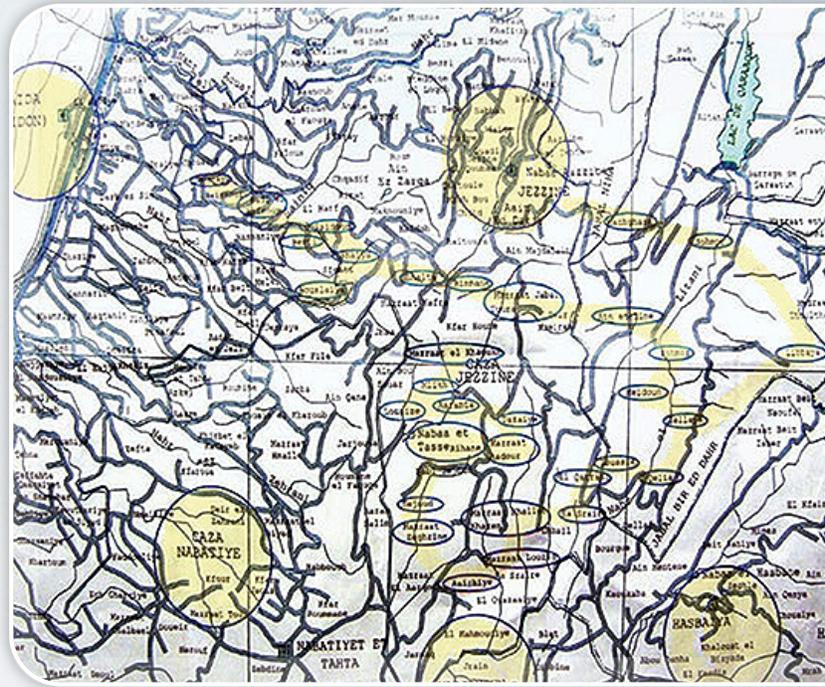
My husband Ari had served in the U.S. army. When he immigrated to Israel in 1976, he was quickly inducted into the Israeli army and sent to Lebanon in 1982 to fight Arafat's war against Israel.

Sadly, Major Haddad suddenly became ill and in his absence, along with the lack of oversight by the U.N. Peacekeepers, within a year Arafat was back.

## The PLO Merges with Hezbollah

Out of this boiling pot, a Shiite militia, Hezbollah (Arabic for the "Party of God") was created. The Shiite Arabs were the poorest section of Lebanon society with many grievances, and gladly joined the militia. In the same year of 1982, the PLO merged with Hezbollah. It had three clearcut goals: (1) to destroy the nation of Israel, (2) to destroy the Christian citizens of Lebanon, and (3) to ultimately conquer the world with the Shiite religion.

In 1979, the Ayatollah Khomeini, who violently came to power in Iran, also had three clearcut goals: (1) to destroy the nation of Israel, (2) to destroy the Great Satan America, and (3) to make Shiite Islam the world's religion. The Shiite nation of Iran saw an opportunity that could not be missed to make Hezbollah the scion, the offspring, the proxy of his Iranian Islamic Revolution. He would become Hezbollah's primary funder.



Map of Hezbollah tunnel systems in southern Lebanon (Credit: Alma Research & Education Center)

With Iranian money, Hezbollah built a vast tunnel network far more powerful and sophisticated than that of Hamas. Whereas Hamas had dug a 300-mile-long network of underground tunnels, the IDF intelligence concludes Hezbollah has created a vast tunnel system in south Lebanon, much larger, and longer—from Beirut all the way to Israel's border.<sup>1</sup> In some places even crossing into Israeli territory.

When given the opportunity, like in 2018, Israel destroyed many miles of tunnel that crossed into Israel in Operation Northern Shield. But with the constant flow of Iranian cash, since then Hezbollah has rebuilt new tunnels parallel to the old ones.

## The Biggest Threat

Hezbollah is by far the strongest force in Lebanon. The UN peacekeepers disappear whenever Hezbollah warriors show up. In fact, many Lebanese, including the 19% population left of Christian communities, are boldly saying, "Hezbollah's danger to Lebanon is huge." As the number of Christians diminished in the country over recent decades, the nation deteriorated economically and culturally and is considered by many today a failed state.

<sup>1</sup> Timesofisrael.com, 5/18/2021

## LEBANON IN 2006

- LEBANESE CONTROLLED
- HEZBOLLAH CONTROLLED



Currently, Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah's leader claims they have 100,000 well-trained soldiers. Not only that, Hezbollah's political arm is also a major force dominating Lebanese politics and spreading Iran's influence throughout the Arab world. And now its leader says they have precision-guided missiles that can hit anywhere in Israel and prevent ships from reaching Israel's Mediterranean coast, as well as advanced drones that can either strike or gather intelligence.

Israel today considers Hezbollah its most serious immediate threat, estimating that the terror group has some 150,000 rockets and missiles aimed at it. In fact, the Israeli population of some 100,000 living in Galilee have had to vacate their homes since October, and are at this time living in hotel rooms across the nation.

Unlike in Gaza where the tunnel network is used mostly for housing of terrorists, small weapons and sneaking under neighborhoods undetected to shoot rockets from below or above, in Lebanon, tactical tunnels can be large enough to drive massive trucks through. They enable terrorists to fight from underground—to fire large missiles from tunnel shafts and duck back in, to rearm from weapons stores inside, to rest and emerge again.

## Funded by U.S. Trained by North Korea.

Back in its time of leadership, the Obama administration unfroze funds for Iran to the tune of \$150 billion<sup>2</sup> creating a clear path to building tunnels in both Gaza and in Lebanon. Now, President Biden has unblocked another minimum of \$16 billion<sup>3</sup>, though another watchdog says Biden has actually given more than \$50 billion.<sup>4</sup>

And guess who taught them to dig tunnels? None other than the North Koreans who have been teaching these skills since the 1980's. After these many years, Hezbollah now has the technology and know-how to make their own tunnels. In fact, they have set up civilian companies, Shiite-owned, overseen by a company called Jihad Construction, that also does a number of agricultural projects. One such company, the Mustafa Commercial and Contracting Company interacted with the United Nations Development Program.<sup>5</sup>

## The Real Power Behind Iran: The Hidden Imam

Iran is delighted with its creation of a monster killing machine in Hezbollah. What is it about the Islamic religion that drives its followers to murder, rape and

Pro-Iranian Hezbollah fighters take the oath during a military exercise in a camp in southern Lebanon.



<sup>2</sup> Newsweek, 10/17/ 2023 | <sup>3</sup> Iranintl.com, 11/15/2023 | <sup>4</sup> Fdd.org, >Iran, 10/17/2023 | <sup>5</sup> TimesofIsrael.com, 1/2/2024



Credit: Alma Research & Education Center

torture those they hate? Especially, what is it that causes them to hate Jews, anywhere they are? Of course there are Muslims around the world who are peaceful and kind to their neighbors, but the facts cannot be denied that Islamic regimes are prone to incredible evil and savage atrocities and depravities.

In Shiite Islam, there is a doctrine of an end-of-the-age scenario. It began like this: A man named Muhammad al-Mahdi, went into hiding in the 9th century. He became known as the Hidden Imam (Mahdi), believed to be the twelfth Imam. Most importantly, he is expected to reappear at the end of days at a time of widespread injustice and tyranny. His return will precede the final Day of Judgement.

### Jesus is Seen as a Muslim

For those who have studied even a little, it is clear the differences between Christianity and Islam are massive. Shiites believe that “Yeshua was not crucified,” but as the Quran states, “...It was made to appear to them”, meaning they believe that someone made to look like Yeshua was crucified instead.

They also believe that Prophet Yeshua will return to earth to be like a minister submitted to Imam Mahdi and his main mission will be to correct the dogma of Trinity and to clarify his human personality

Underground Missile Sites of Hezbollah in East Baalbek, Lebanon

and servitude to Allah. The Imam and Prophet Yeshua together will bring peace to the world. This eschatological figure is central to Shiite theology.

According to many documents and articles, like this one in the Jerusalem Post<sup>6</sup> this apocalyptic belief is widely held by Iran’s supreme leader and his followers. It quoted Iranian Ayatollah Mohammad Mirbagheri, “In order for the Hidden Imam to reappear, we must engage in widespread fighting with the West.”

Several jihadist groups like ISIS act in the belief that their terrorism will hasten the appearance of the Mahdi. The fanatical leaders are convinced that at the end of days, the Hidden Imam will appear in the midst of violent apocalyptic scenario played out on a battle front stained with infidels’ blood.

Professor Moshe Sharon (86), one of the most senior Middle East scholars in Israel, is convinced that the majority of Israelis have no real idea as to the profound depth of the hatred of Jews and Israel that is ingrained in Islam.

And what do these Muslims believe will come of the Jews in this chaos?

According to the hadith (sayings of the prophet Mohammed), the end of days will not arrive until the Muslims kill all the Jews, apart from those who choose to hide behind trees and stones.

As such, the hadith continues by recommending that perhaps the Muslims should make the effort of looking behind the trees and the stones, as there might be Jews hiding there, so that they don’t miss out on finding any of them.<sup>7</sup>

The word “peace”, as a political concept in Islam, exists only within the collective nation of Muslims. There is no peace between the Muslims and the Jews and/or the Christians.”

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<sup>6</sup> Aug. 17, 2019 | <sup>7</sup> Jerusalem Post, 9/4/2024 Nadav Shragai

Marwan Naamani/dpa/Alamy Live News

### Suddenly

As I was working on this article, I suddenly saw a notice on my phone that unmanned aircrafts and missiles of several varieties had been launched by Iran to Israel, and would be arriving in several hours. I focused on prayer, dealing with my trust in God—and finishing this article. Soon, I began receiving text messages from my friends and associates in many different countries who were praying and inquiring of our safety.

I read the constant breaking news, but no rockets, no sirens came to our suburb near Jerusalem. Then at a distance I began to hear quite a number of booms which turned out to be our Air Force taking down missiles over Jerusalem.

One memory Israelis will never forget was to watch Israel protect Islamic holy sites by shooting down missiles over the Dome of the Rock—the ancient site of our Temple Mount. Yes! Israel once again had to protect Muslims from Muslim attacks.

The next day, as more of the story began to unfold, it was beyond anything than I could have dreamed. 170 drones and 150 missiles were blown out of the sky by the IAF with this sudden coalition of U.S., Britain, France, Germany and Jordan, and even Saudi Arabia!!! Out of over 300 projectiles 99% were destroyed before they reached Israel!

It was a true night of witnessing the verse, “No weapon formed against you will prosper.” At the time of the writing of this article, Israel is considering its response. But we as His followers are confident in one thing: God is the same God. Yesterday. Today. Forever. ■



Rights by Section 27a



Above: Israel shoots down Iranian suicide drones and missiles over the Dome of the Rock. Left: Israeli poses with remains of missile after dragging it out of the Dead Sea with his truck. According to the news, this section was just the fuel tank of the giant missile that flew off course when it was shot out of the sky by Israeli Air Defense. It is capable of carrying 750 kilos of explosives or a nuclear warhead.

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In the end we are all brothers



It's important to note that unlike the majority of Palestinian Arabs (in polls) who overwhelmingly support the terrorist efforts of Hamas and Hezbollah to destroy Israel, the vast majority of Iranian people do not support their government's hatred of Israel and are very vocal about their desire for their own freedom and peace between the two nations.

This fascinating bond between peoples has been evident as both sides often share affections across social media and Israelis have even organized gatherings of solidarity when Iranians have hit the streets in protest of their governments oppression.

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Shalom from Jerusalem!

It's no secret that in times of war and turmoil in the Bible, **the Jewish people would turn to the God of Israel and cry out for help.**

**It's like a default that happens.** Though there were times where the desire was there, but the knowledge of God's Word was sorely lacking. In Nehemiah 8, when Ezra gathered the returning exiles to read to them from the books of Moses, the Scriptures describe the attentiveness of the Israelites who had returned from decades of life in foreign lands.

In fact, **so many were weeping from the reading of the Law that the Levites had to encourage the people, "Don't grieve! What is happening is good! Go eat a feast and celebrate before the Lord!"** True repentance was taking place when the people understood God's message to them.

As the many enemies that surround Israel today proclaim their goal to utterly destroy her, **many Jews are experiencing that fresh pull to again seek God.** Soldiers are praying together and putting on tefillin trying to reach out to God. Civilians are turning to traditional prayer books and even singing popular songs from the radio whose lyrics are entirely scriptures. They are grasping for what they have available to them.

This is why **we release a new worship song every other week in Hebrew, English and Arabic.** This is why **we are a publishing company that prints and distributes books** that explain the ways of God for our Jewish people.

This is why it is so amazing to **have congregations across Israel available to nurture seeds of this yearning for God.** Through them we can do more than just temporarily reach those who had to flee their homes.

Just this month **several Israelis came forward to give their lives to God at Congregation Tiferet Yeshua.** (Tiferet Yeshua is the congregation Ari and Shira founded in Tel Aviv that is now pastored by Gil and Tamar Afriat.) **Together they embraced the New Covenant** promised to the Jewish people in Jeremiah 31.

A couple of days later, another four followed Yeshua in immersion. One is a soldier, who through a life and death situation in Gaza returned to the Lord. A second came to the Lord following the fervent prayers of her husband and family. Yet another has been delivered from a background of Jewish mysticism and the occult.

The effectiveness of outreach through Israeli congregations is why supporting Messianic Congregations and their leaders across the country is an important part of Maoz' vision. Every year Maoz gives hundreds of thousands of dollars to make Israeli congregations stronger. And now, more than ever we have a chance to build a strong Body of believers!

The Kingdom of Heaven is advancing! And you can be a part of it!

*Kobi and Shani Ferguson*

Kobi & Shani Ferguson

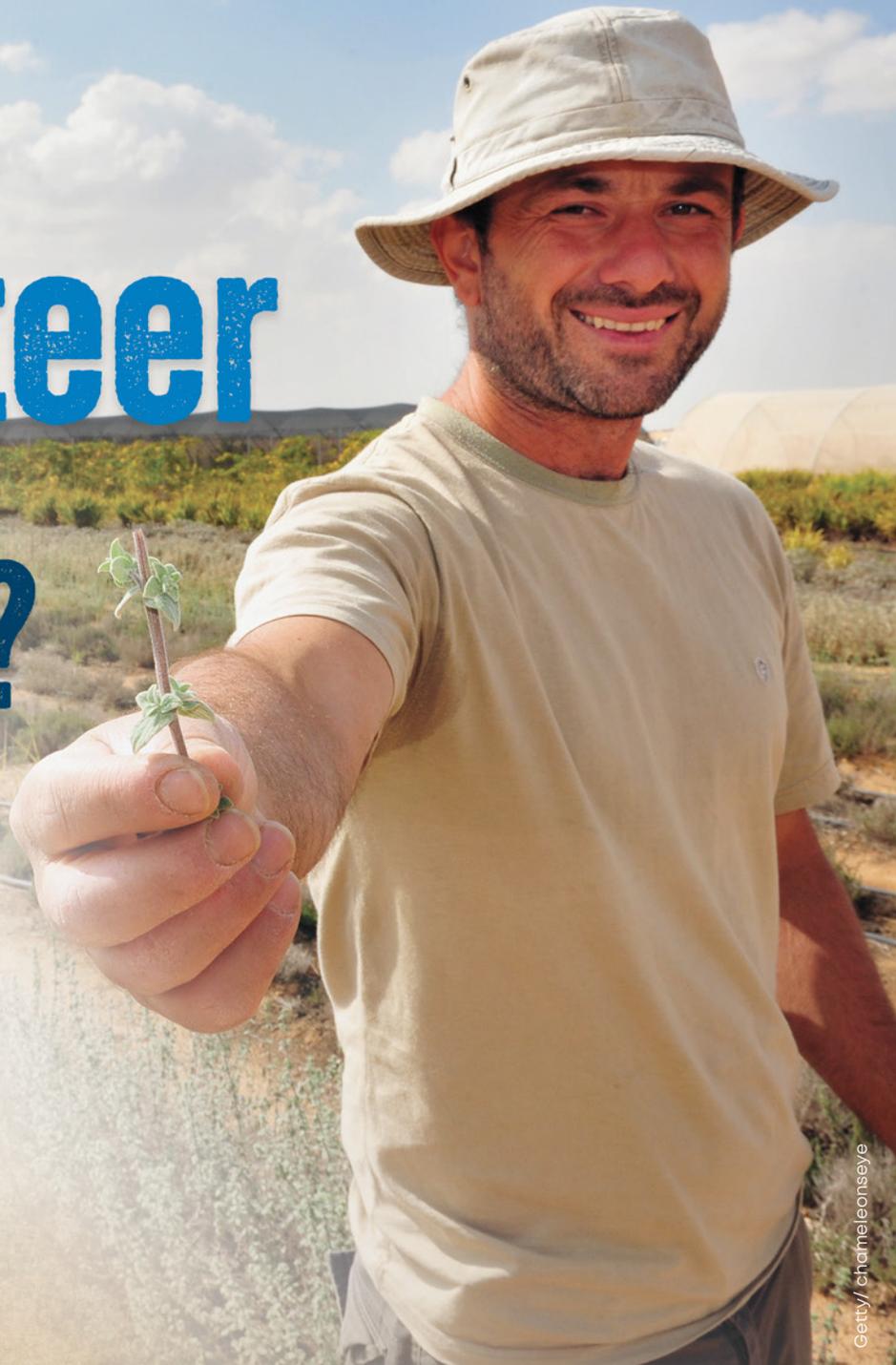
**Kobi Ferguson**  
President & CEO

**Shani Ferguson**  
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Many small  
Israeli villages  
are in need of  
eager volunteers  
this summer.



Getty/ chameleonseye

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