

Dear Israel

There are some things I understand and others I cannot.

by [Samuel Wells](#)

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Smoke rises following an explosion in Gaza, as seen from southern Israel on Sunday, August 10, 2025. (AP Photo / Ohad Zwigenberg)

There's a time to be silent and a time to speak. I want to say something to my Jewish friends and family, in grief and lamentation.

I write as a Christian whose Jewish heritage is dear to me. My grandparents were Jews born in Kyiv who fled from Stalin. After they became Christians, they weren't sure whether or not they were still Jews. But Hitler was sure, so they fled Berlin in

1938. They lived in Haifa in the 1950s.

I believe that God is faithful, that the Jewish people remain at the heart of God's purposes, that without them we Christians can't know who we are, and that Jesus himself was a Jew and still is.

It has now been almost two years since October 7, 2023. Some things I understand. Some things I need help to understand.

I understand the way that day embodied the existential terror of all who live in Israel. I need help to understand how the Israeli government's response has reduced hostility, dismantled hatred, or ended enmity—in short, what it has done to make such an event less likely in the future. It's not possible to destroy an idea. Surely being drawn into a contest of mutually sought obliteration, even if it is won, only stokes hatred for generations to come.

I understand that Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Iranian government seek the complete destruction of Israel and the extermination of all Jews in the region, in some cases even beyond. I understand that it is extremely difficult to live in peace with neighbors who want to make you extinct. I understand that any call for a ceasefire or arms embargo may suggest to Hamas that its actions are not seen as abhorrent and may empower it to resume its merciless ambitions. Still, I need help to understand how the death of 20,000 children makes Israel safer.

I understand that Jews have lived with ethnic oppression for 2,000 years. I need help to understand how many deaths it takes for the current Israeli government to recognize that ethnic oppression can be pursued by more than one side.

I understand that the taking and holding of hostages by Hamas is an outrage and that Israelis were and are rightly desperate to bring the remaining hostages home. I need help to understand how the death of 60,000 people has made the hostages' homecoming more likely.

I understand that some Israeli Jews (and, separately, some dispensationalist Christians) believe their claim to the land fulfills God's promise to Abraham. In Genesis 12 that promise is accompanied by God's corresponding promise that Israel be a blessing to the nations (Gen. 12:3). I celebrate the myriad ways Jewish Israelis bless the world through art, science, learning, spiritual depth, innovation, and compassion. I need help to understand how such blessing is being embodied by

current Israeli policy.

I understand that many see Israel as the only democracy in the region. I need help to understand what kind of democracy it is that abrogates the rule of law and continues to commit atrocities with no sign or statement of regret or remorse.

I understand that antisemitism is a scar on the world and a daily threat to Jews everywhere. I need help to understand how the Israeli government's brutal campaign in Gaza dismantles and discredits antisemitism rather than amplifying and fueling it. There may be evils weapons can't defeat.

I understand it feels to some who support the current Israeli government's actions that the world overlooks atrocities elsewhere. I need help to understand why, if a nation claims to be exceptional, it does not wish to be held to international standards of justice. Does not the Israeli government's refusal to let journalists into Gaza speak for itself? I need help to understand how atrocities committed against Israelis are to be regarded as uniquely evil, while anyone who calls out atrocities committed by the current Israeli government is accused of double standards.

I understand that many who support the government's actions believe they have no other option. I need help to understand how many deaths it will take before any rational war aim is far exceeded. 100,000? 500,000? A million?

I understand that many who support the government's actions believe that Israel has no reliable friends and that the sympathy of onlookers is flaky at best. I need help to understand how, after deaths on such an indescribable scale and starvation as a matter of active policy, Israel expects to find any friends at all.

I understand that many Jews in and beyond Israel share my level of consternation and are increasingly voicing that dismay. I need help to understand how a government that is so ruinous to everything Israel stands for can still be in power.

I understand that in politics people come to believe the end justifies the means. I need help to understand how any legitimate end can be justified by these egregious means.

I am trying to understand. But I find I cannot. Everything I believed, wanted, trusted, longed for Israel to be—the embodiment of God's promise, a sign of hope after the unspeakable Shoah, a light to lighten the nations—is being destroyed, not by

external attackers but by an internal loss of soul, identity, calling, and truth.

There's more than one way to lose a war. One way is becoming indistinguishable from your enemy. When people dreamed, planned, fought for, and died for a holy land, was it for this?

This is Sam Wells's last article as a regular CENTURY columnist, a role he has played for more than a decade. We are grateful for his many contributions. —Ed.