



BEIT HA'AM

"HARAVOT BARZEL" - THE WAR IN GAZA

On October 7, 2023, at 6:30 in the morning, thousands of Hamas terrorists streamed into Israel from the Gaza Strip. Riding on vehicles and equipped with weapons, they infiltrated IDF bases, kibbutzim in the Gaza envelope, and the nearby towns. They murdered hundreds of citizens, raped women, looted and burned down homes, and kidnapped hundreds of children, women, soldiers and elderly Israelis to Gaza. Hamas caught the State of Israel and the IDF off guard.

The army pulled itself together quickly, and Israel declared war on Gaza, whose aims are to eradicate the Hamas government and its military capabilities and to bring the hostages home. Any way you look at them, the events have been unprecedented. The resulting shock waves and upheaval in Israel's civil society and among Israelis and Jews worldwide have been some of the most difficult we have ever known.

The huge surge in antisemitic incidents, the media coverage, and the mass demonstrations against Israel across the globe have challenged everything we knew before and were familiar with. Questions relating to identity have emerged with great force.

Using videos, items from the press and websites, we have tried in this Beit Ha'am booklet to broaden the scope of the topic and raise basic and relevant questions.

We invite you to choose the sections that interest you the most, and devote time and thought to them. We also encourage you to hold a candid and open-minded discussion dealing with them.

Gusti Yehoshua Braverman
Head of the Department of Irigoon and Israelis Abroad
The World Zionist Organization



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The booklet contains numerous materials in each of its 'chapters.' There is no need to delve into all of them. We suggest that the person leading the session choose the ones most suitable to the nature of the session and the audience.



The picture was downloaded from the Government Press Office website. Photographer: Krishel Amzaleg



What Happened on October 7th?

On Shabbat, October 7, 2023, on the morning of Simchat Torah, Israel experienced the deadliest terrorist attack in its history.

Its centerpiece was the element of surprise.

The attack began at 6:29 with a heavy barrage of rockets fired from the Gaza Strip to Israel.

Using the rockets as a distraction, Hamas was able to damage the fence separating the Gaza Strip from Israel and to sabotage the IDF's state-of-the-art early detection setup (including cameras, automated shooting systems, electrical power, communications networks, and more).

1,200 Hamas terrorists streamed into Israel. Their initial targets were the IDF outposts deployed along the border.

The terrorists seized control of four outposts (which were caught off guard and unprepared for battle), killed and wounded a large number of soldiers, and abducted many others. At the same time, bands of terrorists, riding on pickup trucks and equipped with a lot of weapons, stormed kibbutzim, moshavim and towns located in the Gaza envelope. Other bands of terrorists positioned themselves on the main roads and set up road blocks to prevent Israeli forces from coming to the area.

At some of the kibbutzim, members of their own rapid response teams managed to fend off the terrorists. Others were 'under siege' for several hours.

The terrorists broke into the residents' homes, whom they murdered and raped. They also mutilated their bodies while they were still alive and after killing them. They looted everything they could get their hands on, and before leaving torched homes and other property, in addition to burning people alive.

At three of the kibbutzim, the results were especially devastating: the kibbutzim Kfar Aza, Be'eri and Nahal Oz. Scores of their members were murdered, and scores more were abducted to the Gaza Strip.

At the time the invasion started, thousands of young

Israelis were partying at the Nova festival (a music festival held in nature) not far from the Gaza-Israel fence. Little did they know that dozens of terrorists were also encircling them from every possible direction. At 7:00, the terrorists began shooting at the partygoers and also threw hand grenades at them. They slaughtered, raped, murdered and double tapped their victims, after which they mutilated and torched many of the bodies. Other terrorists were positioned on the road that led out of the venue, where they killed many of those who tried to escape in their own cars. Dozens of young people from the party were also caught and abducted to the Gaza Strip.

Volunteers from ZAKA Search and Rescue, who arrived at the scene a few hours after it all started, would later share that in all their years of working for the organization, they never encountered brutality of such magnitude.

It was late afternoon before substantial forces of the IDF reached the communities that were under attack. Displaying unequalled heroism and under impossible conditions, they fought against the terrorists. Only after 48 hours of grueling battles did they manage to completely eliminate the threat. 300 soldiers lost their lives in the battles that took place that Shabbat.

1,144 Israelis were murdered in the October 7th attack, 369 of them at the Nova festival. Dozens of police officers and members of rescue teams were also among the dead. Around 250 people were abducted to the Gaza Strip, including civilians, foreigners, soldiers, babies, children, women and senior citizens.

Following the attack, the Government of Israel declared war on Hamas - calling it "Haravot Barzel" - Swords of Iron.

▶ [Minute by Minute](#) - in this video, you can watch a detailed, 7-minute account of the events of October 7th.

(Hebrew with English subtitles, 7 minutes). Source; Kan News Twitter page



What Preceded October 7th?

Starting With the State of Israel's Unilateral Disengagement From the Gaza Strip

Hamas is an Islamist Palestinian terrorist organization that was founded in 1987. Its declared objective is to destroy the State of Israel and establish a Palestinian state on all the territory belonging to Israel – "from the river to the sea."

Hamas won a large majority in the democratic elections held in Gaza in 2006.

Following those elections, the Gaza Strip was characterized by violent internal struggles, which included assassinations and the imprisonment of PLO activists who had previously ruled there. At the end of 2007, Hamas secured complete control of all the government institutions and security forces in the Gaza Strip.

Hamas has since then ruled the Gaza Strip, and from 2017 has operated under the leadership of Yahya Sinwar.

In 2005, the State of Israel disengaged from the Gaza Strip, while vacating around 8,600 Jewish settlers from the territories that it had conquered there in the Six Day War. Israel also dismantled its military government, but continues to oversee the border crossings between the Gaza Strip and Israel.

Even though Israel withdrew from those territories, Hamas continued to fire rockets at the Israeli communities in the Gaza envelope on a regular basis.

Once every few years, the rocket fire has escalated into larger-scale fighting between Israel and Hamas.

That meant heavy barrages of rockets targeted at the center of Israel, followed by attacks on Hamas's terrorist infrastructure by the IDF.

By circulating footage from the combat zones within the Gaza Strip, Hamas has managed to enlist world opinion in their favor, portraying themselves as a popular organization of freedom fighters and peace lovers. This is despite the fact that Hamas uses its citizens as human shields and deploys its rocket launchers and weapons caches in hospitals, schools and mosques.

Hamas has also used the billions of dollars it received from Qatar for repairing the damages of the fighting (whose delivery in 'suitcases of cash' was approved by the Government of Israel), in addition to donations from Western countries, to build terror tunnels and buy more weapons. Consequently, the citizens of Gaza have been left to lead a life of abject poverty, while becoming pawns in the hands of Hamas as it tries to attain its goals.

In response to the daily regime of terror created by Hamas, the State of Israel put safeguards in place in the

Gaza envelope communities, developed the Iron Dome air defense system, and constructed a fence using cutting-edge technology to separate the Gaza Strip from Israel. Israel also believed that enabling Gazans to make a decent living would lead to quiet.

That 'concept' fell apart on October 7th.

Israeli citizens now realize that the policy of 'containing' the rocket fire and the periodic military operations is no longer valid.

The State of Israel declared war on Hamas – calling it "Haravot Barzel" – Swords of Iron.

The objectives of the war are to bring the hostages home, eradicate Hamas's terrorist capabilities and its militants, and to restore quiet and security to Israeli citizens.

You can watch authentic footage about Hamas in the following videos:

▶ [Almog Boker](#) describes Hamas's tunnels in Gaza (Hebrew, 1.5 minutes). Source: [Almog Boker's Facebook page](#)

▶ [Yoseph Haddad](#) talks about the 'innocent' residents of Gaza (English, with Hebrew subtitles, 1.5 minutes). Source: [Yoseph Haddad's Facebook page](#)

▶ [A conversation between two Gaza residents](#), in which they talk about a Hamas command post being located beneath Shifa Hospital (Arabic, with Hebrew and English subtitles, 40 seconds)

Mosab Hassan Yousef, the son of a Hamas co-founder:

▶ [Speaking at the UN](#) (English, with Hebrew subtitles, 15 seconds). Source: YouTube

▶ [Responding to charges against Israel at a session of the United Nations Human Rights Council](#)

(English, with Hebrew subtitles, 2.5 minutes). Source: Facebook page of Red Flag-Mivzaklive News

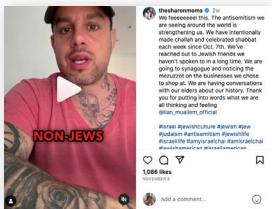




**"We are one people.
As repeatedly happens in history,
our enemies make us one whether we wish it nor
not. Distress binds us together, and, thus united, we
suddenly discover our strength..."**

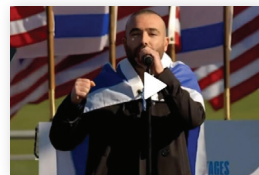
(Theodor Herzl, The Jewish State)

**? Herzl's wrote those words at the end of the
19th century. Even though about 100 years have
elapsed since then - is what he wrote still valid?**



▶ **Watch the video made by Ilan Muallem**, a Jewish American, who talks about the change he has undergone since October 7th (English, 1:17 minutes). Source: Ilan Muallem's Instagram page

- ? • How do you feel about what Ilan said?**
• Should we do things differently so we won't need extreme scenarios in order to feel part of the Jewish people?



▶ **Watch the video of Omer Adam** singing Hatikva at a rally 1 minute. Source: YouTube
On November 14, 2023, around 300,000 Jews and supporters of Israel gathered on the National

Mall in Washington, D.C. to express their solidarity with Israel and its war against Hamas. They also demanded the release of the hostages held by Hamas, and denounced the wave of antisemitism that is sweeping across the United States.

- ? • Which shared values cause hundreds of thousands of Jews to leave their homes and attend a pro-Israel rally?**

- ? • How do you feel about what the then Prime Minister of Israel, Golda Meir, said?**
• Is the existence of the State of Israel crucial to the lives of Jews worldwide? Has your position changed as a result of the events of October 7th? In what way?

Four days after Hamas terrorists infiltrated Israel, Joe Biden, the President of the United States, delivered a speech to the public. He concluded by sharing the following story:

"50 years ago, as a young senator, I visited Israel for the first time. I met with Golda Meir and we had a long talk in her office. It was just before the Yom Kippur War.


Golda saw the consternation on my face. Perhaps because I looked so concerned, she leaned over and whispered to me: 'Don't worry, Senator Biden. We have a secret weapon here in Israel.' And you have my word that this is what she said: 'The weapon is that we have no place else to go. We have no place else to go!'

For 75 years, Israel has stood as the ultimate guarantor of security of Jewish people around the world, so that the atrocities of the past could never happen again..."

▶ **Watch a video of President Biden's speech**

(English, with Hebrew subtitles, 10:15 minutes). Source: YouTube.
The above-cited quote can be heard between minutes 8:30 and 9:50.




 "This is a remarkable phenomenon. Social media and television channels repeatedly showcase short video clips of students tearing down pictures of Israeli hostages. The act has become a trend, not limited to Palestinian students or students of Middle Eastern origin. Students from diverse backgrounds and ethnicities are participating...

It's not about siding with Hamas. 90% of them have no idea who or what Hamas is. It's the woke obsession where the 'weak' is always right, even if they are ruthless murderers, and the 'strong' is the evil villain. It doesn't matter that Hamas calls for the annihilation of Jews and Christians and world domination. For them, Hamas represents the Palestinians who have become the ultimate oppressed. And Israel, after years of brainwashing, is now labelled as a 'colonialist apartheid state.'

In recent weeks, even Israeli leftists have found themselves amazed by the celebration of hatred... they understand that something has gone awry in the thought process within progressive leftist circles, some of whom persist in supporting Hamas with well-known and deceptive excuses like 'it's their right to retaliate,' 'Gaza is the largest prison in the world' or 'it's the fault of oppression and occupation.'


(Ben-Dror Yemini, *Yedioth Ahronoth*, November 10, 2023)

 "War crimes do not justify more war crimes. Revenge is not a strategy for safety for anyone."

"We refuse to let our grief be used to justify the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. We must act to stop a second Nakba."

"Ahistorical and one-sided statements and resolutions, from the President and from Congress, that only address Israeli losses will do nothing to stop the bloodshed. Where are those with the courage and the heart to speak to Palestinian lives lost and homes destroyed today by Israeli warplanes? Or of the context of ongoing occupation and siege that created this crisis?"

(Excerpts from statements made by IfNotNow during the week following the October 7th attack. IfNotNow is a political movement comprised of Jewish Americans who oppose the Israeli occupation)

 "The new trend among young Jewish-Americans is to join movements that deny the existence of the State of Israel, which are pressing the government in Washington to wash its hands of Israel..."

(Zvika Klein, *Makor Rishon*, July 17, 2021)

As one can learn from the above-cited quotes, quite a few Jews in the United States, and not only there, endorse the progressive worldviews that include strong opposition to the State of Israel. The trend is spreading on college campuses, and has even reached Zionist youth movements.

• Can someone be a progressive Zionist?



• What is your take on this? Where do you stand when it comes to the progressive worldviews concerning Israel?

• In your opinion, should the leadership of the Zionist youth movements take an unequivocal stand on this matter, or should they accommodate the diversity of opinions?





▶ [Watch this video](#) about anti-Israel student protests on campuses in the United States.

(English, with Hebrew subtitles. 1.5 minutes). Source: An article posted on the Israel Hayom website, October 18, 2023)

What did you feel while watching the video?

"A cause for concern: a dramatic rise of 500% in antisemitism in the world since the start of the war in Gaza"

"A new report published by the World Zionist Organization, the Ministry for Diaspora Affairs and the Jewish Agency shows a sharp rise in antisemitic incidents that have occurred since the start of the war. Calls for harming Jewish communities across the globe and a troublesome discourse on social media...

The data indicate not only a rise in the number of incidents of modern antisemitism and calls for the destruction of Israel, but also calls for harming Jewish communities across the globe because of the war.

Universities around the world are reporting that most of their Jewish students are experiencing fear and sadness due to the situation in Israel...and around 58% claim that they are not receiving support from the college or university which they attend, using freedom of speech as their pretext. Many Jewish communities across the globe are reporting a dramatic decline in their sense of personal safety."

(Assaf Golan, *Israel Hayom*, October 30, 2023)

"One of the things that students are reporting is that apart from it being really difficult to witness the hatred, the hatred you see in the videos represents a minority.

That means that the pro-Palestinian supporters on the campuses comprise maybe 10% of the entire student body...I think that what is resonating here is the silence of those who are not pro-Palestinian, who are not doing enough to protect their Jewish friends on campus..."

Some of the troubling incidents that were reported include:

- An antisemitic professor at Cornell University described the massacre carried out by Hamas terrorists on Simchat Torah in the Western Negev as being a "moving event."
- At the University of Michigan, close to 1,000 faculty members signed a statement blaming Israel for the atrocities of the Hamas terrorists..."

(Alexandra Lukacs, *Ynet*, October 29, 2023)

"Dr. Amira Halperin, who teaches at a British university, reported that students who support Hamas sent her threatening emails, in which they said that 'Israel must be destroyed.'"

Are you really afraid that someone will hurt you physically? "Very much so. And I'll also tell you why - because I'm alone. We have no assistance, including from the university's administration."

Why don't approach them and inform them that you're experiencing threats? "The universities are advocates of the same values that the students embrace. In other words, there is no separation here between students and lecturers or professors. All of them are against us. There's no one to talk to, no one to lodge a complaint with."

(Alexandra Lukacs, *Ynet*, January 1, 2024)



- With regard to the above quotes, what worries you the most today?
- Even though they are not part of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Jews in the Diaspora feel threatened as a result of the events in Israel.
As you see it, what is Israel for Jews in the Diaspora - an asset or a liability?



Watch the following videos, and discuss the questions that arise from them:



▶ [Watch this animated video](#) that depicts the mother of a Hamas terrorist, who is inquiring whether she can register her son for classes at Harvard.

(English, with Hebrew and English subtitles. 3.1 minutes).
Posted on the Mako Culture website on November 13, 2023)



- What did you think/feel while watching the video?
- In your opinion, did this conversation really take place?

(* Racheli Rottner is an Israeli creator who makes prank calls and turns them into animated clips)

▶ [Watch this video](#) about peace activists from Columbia University talking with a Hamas militant.

(English, with Hebrew subtitles. 2.5 minutes). Source: an *Eretz Nehederet* skit, posted on its Facebook page.

A few weeks after the start of the war in Gaza, *Eretz Nehederet*, the highly popular Israeli comedy sketch show, put on a skit depicting 'peace activists' from Columbia University talking with a Hamas terrorist/member.



- What emotions did the video evoke (scorn, anger, laughter, embarrassment, identification, opposition, etc.)?
- Although the skit was intended for an Israeli audience, it got millions of views around the world. As you see it, did it achieve its aims, or did it cause damage?



▶ [Watch this video](#) of Harry Potter-like characters impersonating the American university presidents who refused to condemn the calls for Jewish genocide.

(English, with English subtitles. 4 minutes).
Source: an *Eretz Nehederet* skit, posted on YouTube.



What is your view of what is happening on the campuses in the United States?



Soldiers from the Golani Brigade, after taking control of the Hamas parliament building in Gaza (The photograph was downloaded from social media documentation, subject to the provisions of Section 27A of the Copyright Law)



An Israeli journalist drinking coffee amid the ruins of Gaza City
(Photograph: Shai Levy, Mako)



The photograph is the property of the IDF Spokesperson's Unit

A ceremony conducted by soldiers from the Golani Brigade in memory of their fellow soldiers, held on the Hamas roll call plaza in the heart of Gaza



- What was your initial feeling when you first saw these images?
- What effect can making them public have in the world?
- In our day and age, should images from war zones be censored due to political/strategic considerations?



A FEW FACTS

About the IDF:

On October 16, 2009, Colonel Richard Kemp, a high-ranking British officer, addressed the United Nations Human Rights Council in the matter of the Goldstone Report and said the following: "The IDF does more to safeguard the rights of civilians than other army in the history of warfare."

"I am the former commander of the British forces in Afghanistan. I served with NATO and the United Nations... commanded troops in Northern Ireland, Bosnia and Macedonia and participated in the Gulf War. I was in Iraq after the 2003 invasion, and worked on international counterterrorism for the British Government. Based on my knowledge and experience, I can say this:

- During Operation Cast Lead, the Israel Defense Forces did more to safeguard the rights of civilians than any other army in the history of warfare.
- Israel did so while facing an enemy that deliberately positioned its military capability behind the human shield of the civilian population.
- Hamas, like Hezbollah, are experts at driving the media agenda. Both organizations always have people who are ready to give interviews condemning Israel for war crimes. They are adept at distorting the facts.
- There is an automatic, Pavlovian response by many in the international media, and among human rights groups, that the IDF is in the wrong, that they are abusing human rights.
- The truth is that the IDF took extraordinary measures to warn Gaza civilians of targeted areas, dropping over 2 million leaflets and making more than 100,000 phone calls.
- Many missions that could have taken out Hamas military capability were aborted to prevent civilian casualties.
- During the conflict, the IDF allowed huge amounts of humanitarian aid into Gaza. No other army in the world does the same.
- Despite all of this, innocent civilians were killed. War is chaos and full of mistakes. There have been mistakes by the British, American and other forces in Afghanistan and in Iraq, many of which can be put down to human error. But mistakes are not war crimes.
- The civilian casualties were a consequence of Hamas's way of fighting. They deliberately sacrifice their own civilians.
- Israel did not choose to start the war. It did so in order to stop Hamas from attacking its citizens with rockets.

(A more systematic and complete account of Colonel Kemp's remarks can be heard [in the video](#))

Ruach Tzahal - The IDF Code of Ethics

The IDF's code of ethics was first drafted in 1994.

The IDF educates its troops in accordance with the Jewish and universal ethical values that have been adopted by modern Western civilization, and also in line with the international laws of war. Those values are imparted to the soldiers by their commanders throughout their military service, and considerable attention is devoted to them. A gross violation of them leads to an investigation and, in some cases, to a trial and punishment. One of the key values that is imparted to IDF soldiers is called: **'the purity of arms.'** It says the following:

"Servicemen and servicewomen will use their weapons and force solely for the purpose of their mission, only to the extent necessary, and will maintain their humanity even during combat. Servicemen and servicewomen will not use their weapons and force to harm persons who are not combatants and prisoners of war, and will do everything in their power to avoid causing harm to their lives, bodies, dignity and property."

The Code of Ethics in the War Against Terrorism:

In 2004, in the wake of incidents that occurred in the Gaza Strip and in Judea and Samaria, the IDF decided to adapt its code of ethics to the war against terrorism. To that end, special rules of engagement were drafted, including:

1. Military operations will be carried out solely against military targets;
2. The use of force must be proportional;
3. It is forbidden to attack someone who has surrendered;
4. Only those who have been trained to do so are allowed to investigate prisoners;
5. Servicemen and servicewomen must display respect and consideration towards the population and towards detainees;
6. Conditions permitting, servicemen and servicewomen must provide suitable medical services both to themselves and to the enemy;
7. Looting is totally illegal;
8. Servicemen and servicewomen must respect sites and items that have religious and cultural value;
9. Servicemen and servicemen must report any violation of this code.

▶ [בסרטון המצורף](#) תוכלו לראות מפגנים עזתים כנגד

חמאס במהלך מלחמת חרבות ברזל

ערבית, כתוביות באנגלית ובעברית) 40 שניות. לקוח מהיוטיוב)



About Hamas:

A few weeks prior to October 7, 2023, the Israeli journalist, Ohad Hemo, met with Gazan Palestinians who had fled from Gaza and now live in Europe. After speaking to them, Hemo prepared a piece for the evening news that offered viewers a glimpse of what is really happening inside Gaza City.

▶ [The report was broadcast on Channel 12](#) on November 6, 2023.

(The 14.5-minute video was downloaded from N12. Selected sections for viewing: 1:52-3:45, 4:20-4:50, 5:50-8:30, 10:20-11:00 and 12:30-13:30)

Among other things, the young Gazans shared the following:

- "If you're a Hamas commander or senior official – you're considered a king in Gaza. But if you don't belong to Hamas, your life is a joke. Those who have money, those who live well – are only those who have connections to Hamas. If my father were a Hamas commander, I wouldn't have left Gaza. I could have built a future, someone would have made sure to marry me off, build a house for me, and provide me with a monthly salary."
- "Hamas took a lot from our lives, from our time, from our young people. They stole our future, our aspirations, our hopes. They stole everything good we had in our lives."
- "They're corrupt. They exploit the name 'Islam' to justify what they do. They may call themselves Muslims, but in practice they are wanton. They commit adultery and keep company with prostitutes."
- "Millions of dollars come into Gaza. Why do the people see nothing of that money? It all goes to them, to their families, their children, and their women."
- Hamas detains people and breaks their legs. They can shoot you, kill you, for writing something against Hamas – they can arrest you and tell you: 'You're passing on intelligence. You're a collaborator.' They'll arrest you for 25 years, 10 years. They have no problem with that."
- "Their organization doesn't view us as human beings. For them, we're a business."

▶ [Additional testimony](#) can be heard in a video that documents interrogations conducted by the General Security Service (Shin Bet) following the capture of Hamas terrorists who took part in the October 7th massacre.

(Arabic, with Hebrew subtitles. 9.5 minutes). Source: YouTube



In the photograph: Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari, the IDF Spokesperson, displaying a Hamas command center found beneath Shifa Hospital

Select quotes from the video testify to the use that Hamas makes of hospitals and ambulances for its military operations:

- "During combat, the ambulances are used, among other things, to evacuate militants and activists. They also deliver food, explosives and weapons because that's the safest way to transport them."
- "Most of the political and military leaders of Hamas are hiding in the hospitals, and primarily in Shifa Hospital. They exploit the hospitals so they won't be bombed."
- "Hamas stores weapons and ammunition underneath schools."
- "Many places in the Gaza Strip are booby-trapped. The cables that lead to the devices that trigger them are located in mosques and civilian clinics."

▶ [Another video](#) shows some terrorists explaining how they were instructed to 'purge,' 'seize,' kill and abduct Jews to Gaza on October 7th. They describe what they did without any display of emotion.

(Arabic, with Hebrew subtitles. 7.5 minutes). Source: YouTube

[Watch this video](#) of a young man asking passersby to sign a petition that calls for the liberation of Palestine.

(English, with Hebrew subtitles. 1.05 minutes). Source: Dror Mor's TikTok



What message emerges from this video? Should we be doing something to 'fix' the situation shown in the video?