



Remembering October 7th

A reading for prayer and reflection



October 7th, 2023.

A day that will be etched in our memory forever.
Two years on, we remember this barbaric atrocity,
the largest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust.
October 7th, a Sabbath.
But not an ordinary Sabbath morning.
A Jewish holiday of joy. The end of the year's Torah readings.
A time when families re-enact Aliyah – the Jewish people's return back home. Their home.
Communities on Israel's borders resting.
Shabbat meal items prepared on dining tables.
Families together. Children rising in early morning sunrise.

6:30am. Peace was interrupted by rocket fire.
Air raid sirens howl, warning citizens to take cover.
"We're used to hearing sirens, but this felt different," locals testified.
One rocket. Two rockets. 5,000 rockets.
Israel was under attack. Unprecedented attack.

Armed Hamas terrorists stormed the Israeli border.
"Black Saturday", as it has become known, had begun.
Hamas leaders urged Palestinian men to attack Israeli communities with whatever weapons they had.
Some terrorists dressed as Israeli soldiers.
Paragliders. Bikes. Trucks.
One terrorist, two terrorists. 3,000 Hamas terrorists entered Israel.
Israel was being invaded.

7:00am, Nova Music Festival.
More than 3,000 party-goers run for cover.
One in ten didn't make it.
Young people in their prime.
Dancing, singing, then murdered escaping.
Some dragged away into Gaza.
Peace was broken.
Israel was bleeding.

What started at the border extends deeper into Israel.
For several hours, brave Israelis try to protect their families and communities.
Worried families across Israel attempt in vain to make contact.

From one Kibbutz to another. From House to house. Car to car. Bomb shelter to bomb shelter.
Men, women, children, babies, slaughtered by terrorists in cold blood.
Their attackers boasting on phone calls: "I have killed a Jew!"
Their evil motive: antisemitism.
Innocent people targeted for being Jewish.
Some were shot. Some were tortured. Some were raped.

Many were murdered intentionally in front of their loved ones.
Some attackers live-streamed the brutality on their victims' own phones for their shocked families and friends to witness online.
Houses burned – some with whole families inside.
One victim, two victims. 1,191 murdered. Mostly civilians. Over 4,800 wounded.

251 were taken hostage.
Most were Israeli, but also citizens of many other nations.
This was an attack that affected the world.

October 8th.
Life in Israel had changed.
Israel officially declared a state of war for the first time since 1973.
Israel's aim: to eliminate Hamas's military capabilities and end its rule over Gaza.

Two years have passed. Some hostages released. Some rescued. Others found dead.
Around 48 hostages remain captive in Gaza, some of whom are known to have deceased.
Two years of mistreatment by Hamas. Some hardly seeing daylight. Some held in terror tunnels. Some in buildings used as human shields.
Many needing their prescribed medications.
Women subject to unspeakable abuse.
All barely surviving on little food.

The eldest hostage was 86. Shlomo survived massacre in Iraq. Moved to Israel and started a flourishing family. For 16 months, no video. No testimonies. Nothing. Then the news his family feared most. Shlomo was killed on October 7th and his body is still being held by Hamas in Gaza.

The youngest hostage was only nine months old. Kfir Bibas was abducted along with his 4-year-old brother Ariel.

Both boys and their mother were murdered by Hamas while in captivity.

They were among around 40 babies and children snatched away on that tragic October day.

To echo the Lord's words in Exodus:

"Let My People Go!"

Two years of heartache for Israel.

"Let My People Go!"

Two years of families torn apart.

"Let My People Go!"

Two years of uncertainty.

"Let My People Go!"

Two years have been punctuated by temporary moments of joy when hostages have been rescued or released.

But only as a brief respite to the continual grief and pain.

"Let My People Go!"

Today we remember the massacre of October 7th and all its victims.

We pray for the families whose lives have been torn apart.

For all those grieving the loss of loved ones.

For a nation mourning.

As Isaiah 40:1 says: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God."

We pray for the men, women and children, young and old, who have suffered physical, mental and emotional trauma.

We pray for their healing.

We pray for the saving of all remaining hostages.

We pray for their families.

We pray for Shalom in Zion.

That the people of Israel will dance again.

We look forward to the day when "the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof."

What a marvellous sight, the Bible describes. "And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness." (Zechariah 8)

We pray that Israel's enemies will turn from their wicked ways.

We pray for Israel's defence against terror and for the safety and protection of Israel's borders and all those who dwell in the Land.

(Am Yisrael Chai) The nation of Israel lives.

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We pray for the peace of Jerusalem, in accordance with God's Word:

(Psalm 122:6-9) "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good."

As Christians, we stand in solidarity with the Jewish people in Israel and around the world.

We pray blessing and favour upon them.

For comfort and for their peace.

In the words commanded to Aaron and his sons: (Numbers 6:23-27) "On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace".

AMEN

October 7th Day of Remembrance

CUFI invites you to commemorate this tragic day in your church, prayer group, or as a family on or near to October 7th. We have provided a selection of resources to help you mark the day. Please visit www.cufi.org.uk/October7

"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God."

ISAIAH 40:1



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