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## ISRAEL NEWS

*A collection of the week's news from Israel  
From the Bet El Twinning / Israel Action Committee of  
Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation*

### Commentary...

#### What Will Follow the 'Polite Pogrom' in Canada?

By The Editors of The Free Press

What would you have thought if, a decade ago, we told you Jews had been pushed out of a country's public life? What if we told you it happened not in some remote backwater society—but in Canada?

It would have sounded absurd. And yet.

A viral piece by Jesse Brown in The Atlantic this week describes how antisemitism has seeped into nearly every level of what was once considered one of the world's most progressive societies. It has manifested not only in synagogue attacks and shootings—of which there are many—but in the quiet withdrawal of Jews from Canadian society “without any glass or bones being broken,” simply because the evidence that they are no longer welcome has become overwhelming.

What does that look like? It looks like a Holocaust commemoration ceremony at a Montréal college—held annually for more than 30 years—being canceled this week because of what administrators called a “volatile geopolitical climate.” It looks like 80 percent of Jewish doctors and medical students in Ontario experiencing antisemitism at work since October 7. It looks like the McGill Law Students Association voting this week to boycott Israeli universities following years of escalating campus hostility, including activists telling Jewish students to “go back to Poland,” and graffiti stating “kill all Jews” on bathroom stalls.

The day after that vote, Jonathan Amiel, chair of the Law School's Faculty Advisory Board, resigned. “An institution once defined by intellectual rigour and principled debate,” he wrote, “has, in too many instances, become an environment where being Jewish, identifying as a Zionist, or maintaining any association with the State of Israel carries professional and personal risk.”

As Casey Babb put it in The Free Press earlier this month, demonizing Jews in Canada “has become so normalized that large swaths of the Jewish community are beginning to retreat inward.” Or, as Brown put it, a “polite pogrom” is underway.

Which leaves us to wonder: Is the most insidious form of antisemitism not the kind that confronts us with visible carnage, but rather the quieter version—the kind that gathers beneath the surface until, almost without our noticing, it reshapes the institutions we rely on most?

It's an urgent question. With Passover approaching next week, the Israeli government is warning citizens traveling abroad to “avoid events identified with Israel or Judaism that are not secured.”

Meanwhile, the UK is reeling from the arson attack on four ambulances belonging to the Jewish charity Hatzola in London—just days after journalist Zoe Strimpel made headlines for confronting the owner of a British gallery displaying Nazi-style antisemitic art. As Strimpel wrote in The Free Press: “Threatening speech and imagery are not the same as physical violence, arson, and threats to life. But there is a connection. The former creates a permission structure for the latter.”

Yesterday, former British prime minister Tony Blair warned in our pages that many Western politicians, “under pressure from party activists and parts of the Muslim community,” are failing to confront what he called an “unholy alliance” between elements of the left and Islamists whose ideology leads to antisemitism. His candor is badly needed—but it's rare among his peers. After the arson attack, the British government and the mayor of London issued the familiar platitude that antisemitism has “no place” in the UK. Meanwhile, the mayor of Bath was among those claiming the attack was an “Israeli false flag operation” or a Jewish insurance scam.

So, how does a “polite pogrom” turn into arson, violence, and

bloodshed? It begins a little something like this: a global pattern of conspiracy and complicity, met with silence from the voices we most need to hear.

That is exactly what this newsletter seeks to confront—by highlighting, as we do below,

both the incidents dramatic enough to command headlines and the ones that are too often all too easy to miss. After all, sometimes the most dangerous warning signs are the ones polite societies convince themselves not to see. (The Free Press Mar 27)

#### Israel, US cannot Miss the Chance to Disarm Hezbollah

By Yossi Hurst

In the summer of 1982, Israeli forces pushed all the way to Beirut with a coherent logic. The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was using Lebanese territory in order to wage a war against Israel. Militarily, the war was successful – the PLO was removed, and Yasser Arafat fled to Tunis.

Unfortunately, the 40 years that have followed have been far worse because of the Iranian Regime's sponsoring of Hezbollah; as former Israeli defense minister Ehud Barak said in 2006, “It was our presence there that created Hezbollah.”

The occupation of southern Lebanon by Israel helped to radicalize Lebanon's Shia population, the community that Hezbollah is rooted in and recruits from today. A far more serious threat than the PLO was created on Israel's border.

Hezbollah is not merely a Lebanese militia, but part of an Iranian regional architecture that puts Tehran a stone's throw from Israeli civilians. With Lebanon's May 2026 parliamentary elections coming up, Israel faces a race against time to ensure that Hezbollah's disarmament remains politically viable.

This is not to argue that Israel should have adopted a passive response to Hezbollah, but that military success in Lebanon has, historically, yielded strategic failures.

The problem has not been Israel's ability to degrade Hezbollah militarily, but its inability to shape the subsequent political order. In Lebanon, failure to shape what followed Israel's 1982 success was a fatal error. Israel cannot afford to make the same mistake again.

The situation in Lebanon today is, in some ways, more favorable for Israel than it has ever been in Hezbollah's time. The group has lost much of its power after Israel's military campaign against it.

Domestically, their situation is not much better; Lebanon's newly formed government has made disarmament of the group a key priority. For the first time in 40 years, the Lebanese Armed Forces have gained operational control south of the Litani River, with deployments of more than 9,000 soldiers.

In January, the Lebanese army stated it had established a state monopoly on arms in an “effective and tangible way,” stating that no group would be able to launch attacks from southern Lebanon.

However, after the killing of Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Hezbollah launched missiles and drones towards the north of Israel. These strikes have reinforced US, Israeli, and Lebanese fears that it is the IRGC, rather than Hezbollah's so-called political arm, that exercises control over the group's military actions. Israel has launched its own counter-offensive as a result, killing hundreds and displacing hundreds of thousands.

There exists a structural issue that a ceasefire cannot resolve, which is that Hezbollah's relationship with Iran is a precondition of the group's continued existence. Despite losing many of its senior commanders and facing a disarmament campaign from the Lebanese government, Hezbollah has, to some degree, regrouped, with IRGC-Quds Force commanders present in Lebanon, advising and perhaps even operating some of Hezbollah's weapons systems.

While the fall of Assad's regime in Syria removed the most convenient land corridor for weapons supply, Iranian arms smuggling thrives in weak state environments, and alternate routes through Iraq and maritime corridors still exist.

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It is therefore crucial that the Lebanese state is strong enough to enforce its own sovereignty. It is the only durable answer to the question of Iran continually rebuilding Hezbollah. The Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) cannot be given a disarmament mission but then starved of the financial and military support it needs to execute it. US Special Envoy Tom Barrack highlighted this, saying that the LAF is “not well equipped,” and that Hezbollah fighters make far more money than LAF soldiers.

Ultimately, a dis-incentivised, under-funded, underequipped army is fighting an army with an eschatological cause, against a backdrop of near-daily Israeli strikes. This is a contradiction that cannot hold.

There is also a crucial internal Lebanese dimension that must be explored. Forced disarmament could trigger civil war with Lebanon’s Shia community, who generally support Hezbollah, or even fracture the LAF itself. The political legitimacy of disarmament is dependent on the Lebanese government being viewed as a sovereign actor in pursuit of its own interests, rather than an enforcer of Israeli or American interests.

This is key in how Shia communities hedge over the next decade. A Lebanese government that is seen as a foreign instrument will fail. If it is seen as asserting national sovereignty, it could hold.

The May 2026 parliamentary elections serve as a deadline. If Hezbollah and its allies perform well, disarmament may stop. There is not a long window, therefore, and continued Israeli strikes further undermine the authority and legitimacy of the Lebanese government, that is supposed to be on equal footing to Israel and the US in this disarmament project.

Somewhat ironically, Israeli military outcomes in Lebanon over the last two years have been hugely successful, destroying much of Hezbollah’s capabilities with few Israeli casualties.

However, with no credible political end state, there is a risk of recreating the failures of 1982 – that instead of eliminating the threat of terrorism on its northern border, Israel’s invasion helped to create a far deeper, entrenched security threat. It is clear how this happened; occupation created resistance, and resistance generated an organization, funded by Iran and trained by the IRGC, in Hezbollah.

The question then, for Israel, is not military success. It is clear that in the northern arena, this can be achieved. It is whether the end state produced by current operations is one where the Lebanese state has the legitimacy and political space to replace Hezbollah in southern Lebanon. If not, a repeat of 1982, where a shattered society and humiliated Shia community create a successor even more difficult to dislodge.

The failure of 1982 was not that Israel lost, but that it did not have an answer for what came next. This question, albeit in a new context, remains unanswered. Hezbollah must be disarmed now, whilst it remains weak. (Jerusalem Post Mar 29)

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## **How is the Iran War Impacting Gaza?** By Shimon Sherman

Before the Iran war, the military reality in Gaza was governed by the October 2025 ceasefire. Under this framework, the Israel Defense Forces pulled back to the “Yellow Line” demarcation, maintaining rigid control over approximately 53% of the Gaza Strip. Rather than engaging in broad offensives, the IDF adopted a strategy of strict perimeter defense, using buffer zones to neutralize the enclave. Since October, this status quo has been overseen by the Board of Peace (BoP), an international body headed by the United States. The Board’s primary mandate has focused on maintaining the ceasefire while coordinating the secure delivery of humanitarian aid. Looking toward the next stages of the framework, the Board was tasked with overseeing the demilitarization of Hamas and the extensive rebuilding of civilian infrastructure throughout the strip.

### **Domestic implications**

However, the eruption of the Iran war on Feb. 28 has forced a shift in the status quo. As Israel diverted its primary air force, infantry and intelligence units toward the Iranian and Lebanese theaters, it compensated for its reduced footprint in Gaza by initiating a palpable spike in offensive operations. Moving beyond the standard enforcement of the yellow line supplemented by occasional punitive airstrikes in response to Hamas ceasefire violations, the IDF has carried out a series of isolated targeted attacks throughout the strip since the beginning of “Operation Roaring Lion.”

In mid-March, the IDF executed a targeted drone strike against Muhammad Abu Shaleh, the military intelligence commander of Hamas’s Khan Younis Brigade. An official IDF statement confirmed the assassination, noting that Shaleh had “operated in violation of the ceasefire agreement to rehabilitate the organization’s capabilities in the Gaza Strip and planned to carry out terror attacks against IDF troops and the State of Israel.” On March 15, the IDF launched a strike against a police vehicle in Salah al-Din, killing nine police officers, including Col. Iyad Abu Yousif, the director of the Intervention Police in central Gaza. Earlier that same morning, the IAF struck an apartment belonging to the Ayyash family, a clan with known affiliations to Hamas, in the southwest of the Nuseirat Refugee Camp. Two days later, on March 17, an Israeli warplane targeted a moving vehicle in western Khan Younis, killing three individuals. To supplement the recent operations of the IAF in Gaza, the Israeli security establishment has increased collaboration with local anti-Hamas militias. The most prominent of these Israeli-backed factions is the “Popular Forces” (PF), a militia operating primarily in the southern Rafah district under Israeli military oversight. Operating with official Israeli sanction, the PF have been equipped with seized Hamas weaponry, including AK-47 assault rifles and PKM machine guns, and have assumed partial responsibility of securing the Rafah border crossing. Throughout February and March 2026, coinciding with the outbreak of the broader regional war, the PF ramped up intense firefights against Hamas operatives and dismantled subterranean tunnel complexes in the Rafah area.

A parallel dynamic has unfolded in Khan Younis, where a separate militia known as the “Strike Force Against Terror” (CTSF) commands approximately 100 fighters under the leadership of Hussam al-Astal. Since the initiation of “Operation Roaring Lion,” the CTSF has launched a series of deep raids into Hamas-controlled zones. Despite the offensive posture, remnants of the Hamas leadership have aggressively moved to exploit the split focus of the IDF to reassert administrative and security dominance. Since the outbreak of the Iran war, Hamas forces have significantly ramped up operations to secure control of the civilian population and to destroy rivals. The primary mechanism for this internal repression is Unit 103 of the Hamas Ministry of Internal Affairs, known as the “Sahm” (Arrow) Unit. Originally established in March 2024 to “combat looting and secure humanitarian aid,” the unit, consisting of plainclothes operatives, has been repurposed into an internal security force. Following the outbreak of the war in late February, Hamas deployed Sahm operatives to violently enforce stringent new taxation protocols on commercial goods, aid and dual-use items entering the enclave. According to the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, this economic extortion is designed to offset the broader financial starvation the group is experiencing and has led to a massive surge in the price of basic home goods. Civilians who resist these extraction methods or attempt to bypass Hamas-sanctioned distribution channels have faced severe retaliation. The U.S. State Department recently verified footage documenting “masked Sahm operatives physically tearing down the tents and stalls of displaced Gazans in Khan Younis who refused to pay taxes, illustrating a brutal campaign to suppress internal dissent.”

Despite the increased taxation, the Iran war has tightened the economic screws on Hamas. The core architecture of the group’s financial solvency relied heavily on smuggling networks managed and directed by Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Kobi Michael, a senior researcher at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) and at the Misgav Institute noted that despite Israeli control over Gaza’s borders, Iran was still giving significant aid to Hamas. “Even recently, the Iranians were trying to smuggle weapons and money to the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and to Hamas abroad,” he told JNS. “Hamas understands that if this regime collapses or is weakened to the degree that it will not be able to continue supporting Hamas, they are in big trouble,” he added. The assault on Iran was explicitly designed to target this infrastructure, with multiple IRGC commanders responsible for collaboration with Palestinian terror groups being neutralized in the early days of the campaign. Outlining the strategic intent behind destroying these networks, U.S. President Donald Trump explained in a briefing in early March that the military campaign ensures “that the Iranian regime cannot continue to arm, fund, and direct terrorist armies

outside of their borders”.

Compounding the loss of Iranian logistical support is the severe restriction of Gaza’s external land borders. On March 1, the Israeli government announced the closure of the Rafah border crossing to Egypt, citing the regional security escalations triggered by the strikes on Iran. This border closure caused an immediate suspension in commercial transit, until its partial reopening on Thursday March, 19. For Hamas, the strategic consequence was a total cessation of the taxation revenue it previously generated from skimming commercial goods and humanitarian aid convoys. Deprived of both external Iranian capital inflows and internal cross-border taxation revenues, the organization’s financial architecture has been deeply undermined by the outbreak of the Iran war.

Beyond the internal impact, the Iran war is likely to have a profound long-term effect on the future of Gaza. The war has had a deep financial impact on the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, potentially dealing a fatal blow to Gaza’s long-term reconstruction prospects. Since the start of the war, Iran has systematically struck critical energy and civilian infrastructure across all six GCC states. Since the start of the war, the GCC has seen a nearly 50% cut in its projected GDP growth rate for 2026. Several major energy exporters in the Gulf have been so damaged that they were forced to declare force majeure and renege on their global shipping commitments. Furthermore, the Iranian Navy and IRGC aggressively disrupted commercial maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, dropping commercial trade through the Strait by 95% and resulting in a severe global economic shock and soaring international oil prices.

Faced with direct physical damage to their territory and the existential economic threat of a prolonged regional war of attrition, Gulf capitals are likely to aggressively pivot their fiscal priorities. In this context, the billions of Gulf dollars which were considered critical for the full implementation of the ceasefire and rebuilding plan are increasingly unlikely to materialize. However, Efraim Inbar, former head of the Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security (JISS), noted that the ideological background of some of the GCC states may drive them to continue backing reconstruction in Gaza despite their own economic interests. “I think Qatar will step in. Qatar is different from the rest of the Gulf states. Qatar has been the financial backer of the Muslim Brothers for decades. This is part of their DNA, and even this war can’t change that,” Inbar told JNS.

Beyond its economic implications, the Iran war is also likely to accelerate a strategic geopolitical realignment between the Gulf states and Israel, while simultaneously pushing the Palestinian issue to the margins of diplomatic relevance. For decades, the demand for a sovereign Palestinian state was the stated, albeit sometimes flexible, prerequisite for normalized diplomatic and security relations between the broader Arab world and Jerusalem. However, the unprecedented Iranian missile and drone barrages against critical GCC energy infrastructure have starkly recalibrated Arab priorities. The Gulf states are increasingly forced to operate less under a paradigm of ideological solidarity with Gaza and more under a paradigm of immediate national survival against the military threat of an increasingly unstable region. “The Gulf countries are recalculating their traditional heading strategy when it comes to Iran,” said Inbar.

“They understood that Iran is a very bitter and very dangerous enemy. I think that they are on their way to join the Americans,” Michael explained. “When we say to join the Americans, it means also to join Israel in the war against Iran to collapse this regime,” he added.

Saudi political analyst Abdulaziz Alshaabani noted that in the eyes of the Gulf, the current crisis has necessitated “swift and decisive measures to strengthen air defense coordination across the region.” Increased affiliation between Gulf states and Israel carries critical implications for the future of Gaza, as these regional drivers are more likely to align with Israeli interests, relieving diplomatic pressure on Jerusalem and increasing pressure on Hamas and the Palestinian Authority. Beyond a potential realignment with the Gulf, the Iran war has also transformed the U.S.-Israeli relationship in a manner that is likely to carry secondary consequences in the Gaza arena.

On one hand, the Iran war represents an unprecedented zenith in joint military coordination and strategic alignment between the United States and Israel. By actively fighting alongside Israeli forces to dismantle Iran’s military-industrial base and eliminate the upper echelons of the Iranian regime, the Trump administration has

unequivocally validated Israel’s broader regional security objectives. This robust military partnership has granted Jerusalem vast diplomatic cover, significantly lowering the threshold of political capital required to achieve its objectives in Gaza. “I think that riding on the dynamic that will be created in Iran, it will be easier for President Trump to give the green light to the IDF to go and to accomplish the mission in Gaza,” Michael observed.

On the other hand, the war has also cost the Trump administration immense political capital and has galvanized a significant anti-Israel narrative in sectors of the U.S. population, including parts of Trump’s base. The administration may thus be hard-pressed to support further Israeli military operations in Gaza.

Inbar explained the double-edged nature of the recent shift in U.S.-Israeli relations, noting “we are interested in weakening Hamas, but we cannot do it ourselves without American permission, and they have a lot of leverage after this war with Iran.”

Michael added that “It will be easier for Israel to make concessions because of the partnership with President Trump in Iran. There are no free meals, as you know.” (JNS Mar 22)

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## **End of Multilateralism: Iran War Exposed NATO's Irrelevance**

By Amine Ayoub

For decades, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has been exalted as the unshakeable bedrock of Western security. Forged in the crucible of the Cold War to repel totalitarian expansion, it was long considered the ultimate deterrent.

Yet, when the geostrategic landscape violently shifted in early 2026 – as a ring of fire closed around the Jewish state and the Iranian regime escalated its proxy wars into direct, kinetic assaults on Western interests – that vaunted shield did not merely fracture. It vanished.

The resounding silence echoing from Brussels following Israel’s necessary, pre-emptive strikes on Iranian military infrastructure represents far more than a transient diplomatic lapse. It is the definitive death certificate of multilateralism and irrefutable proof that the alliance has rendered itself strategically irrelevant against the defining threat of our age. The events of February and March 2026 laid bare the hollow core of the post-World War II order. Iranian forces and their proxies had long destabilized the region, with Hezbollah raining rockets on Israel’s northern frontier and Houthis disrupting vital Red Sea shipping lanes.

When the Islamic Republic escalated to direct strikes, Israel acted as any sovereign, self-respecting nation must: it struck decisively to neutralize an immediate, existential danger. Washington provided critical operational and diplomatic support. NATO, however, offered nothing beyond vague statements from Secretary-General Mark Rutte – passing praise heavily conditioned by a frantic insistence that the alliance would not be drawn into the fray.

Multilateralism was long peddled to Western policymakers as the ultimate force multiplier. It promised a grand union of democratic nations capable of presenting a united front against shared dangers, theoretically offering the profound benefits of collective security without the heavy political burdens of unilateral action.

In practice, however, when confronted by the existential threat of Islamist aggression and a hostile state in Tehran, Europe has reflexively retreated into a posture of studied neutrality. That neutrality is simply a courteous euphemism for strategic timidity and moral abdication.

Consider the alliance’s historical trajectory. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, NATO expanded eastward and intervened in the Balkans. Yet, its post-9/11 operations in Afghanistan culminated in a humiliating withdrawal that telegraphed Western weakness to adversaries globally.

The 2011 Libya campaign, once hailed as a multilateral success, descended into chaos that fueled migration crises and jihadist safe havens across North Africa. Today, with Iranian ballistic missiles not only targeting Israel but theoretically capable of threatening European bases and energy infrastructure, the alliance’s response is telling.

Instead of projecting deterrence, NATO offers endless debates in Brussels about legal niceties while individual members prioritize domestic politics over collective survival.

The current conflict has violently torn away the last lingering illusions of a cohesive global partnership, revealing a stark truth: Israel and the United States are operating as the sole credible guardians of Western civilization in the Middle East.

Continental powers, particularly France and Germany, remain severely constrained by their own myopic policy choices. Their historical reliance on Russian natural gas has simply been replaced by a desperate hedging strategy involving Middle Eastern autocrats and the appeasement of Tehran.

Furthermore, domestic political calculations – shaped by large immigrant populations sympathetic to the ideologies fueling Iran’s aggression – further tie their hands. Their much-touted pursuit of “strategic autonomy” has ultimately manifested as a deliberate refusal to acknowledge reality. They fail to recognize that the front line of their own defense is currently being held by the IDF.

Strategic obsolescence and the end of an era  
Endorsing Israel’s sovereign right to strike the fountainhead of regional and global terrorism should have been the baseline requirement for any serious defense alliance. NATO’s effective refusal to do so demonstrates a fatal flaw: the organization no longer possesses the clarity to recognize its own enemies.

An alliance incapable of identifying the primary, active threat to its members’ fundamental way of life has devolved into a historical artifact. Designed to halt Soviet armor on the plains of Europe, NATO has proven itself utterly unprepared for the asymmetric, ideological, and proxy-driven warfare of the 21st century – a battlespace where missiles fly from Tehran, and terrorists operate with impunity from Beirut to Sanaa.

We are witnessing the final unraveling of the post-World War II security architecture. The United Nations long ago degenerated into a theater for autocratic grandstanding and anti-Western diatribes. The Atlantic alliance now risks becoming a debating club for retired generals and diplomats more concerned with achieving consensus than achieving victory.

The age of seeking lowest-common-denominator agreements among the reluctant is over. If Western civilization is to survive the rising tide of radical aggression, it will not be secured by another European summit communiqué.

It will endure solely because nations like Israel demonstrated the unflinching courage to act when necessary, backed by the only ally that still comprehends the indispensable grammar of hard power. (Jerusalem Post Mar 30)

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## **A Crisis of Faith: The Christian Debate over Jews, Covenant, and Israel**

By Pesach Wolicki

Something strange has been happening in certain corners of the Christian world. Traditional Catholics and many other Christian voices are increasingly claiming that today’s Jews are not really the Jews, that the State of Israel has no significance, and that Christian Zionism is a heresy.

These ideas are no longer confined to fringe platforms; they have entered mainstream discourse, with Tucker Carlson emerging as the most prominent public voice raising such claims. While this may seem like a sideshow to the political conversation, it actually signals a significant theological crisis happening within traditional Christianity.

For more than 1,500 years, mainstream Christian theology regarding the Jews – especially within Catholicism – was shaped by the ideas of Augustine. In his *City of God*, Augustine articulated what later became known as “witness theology.”

The Jews, he argued, were to survive, but in perpetual exile – scattered, powerless, and dependent – serving as a living testimony to Christian truth. This framework made sense in a world where Jews had no sovereignty, no homeland, and no political power. For centuries, this theology and the apparent facts of history aligned.

But today, that world no longer exists. The Jewish people have returned en masse to their land, ingathered from the four corners of the earth, and reestablished sovereignty. We are no longer the “witness people” of Augustine’s imagination – and that creates a problem.

Theology, at its core, is an attempt to understand God’s actions in the world. Augustine himself described theology as faith seeking understanding. He looked at the world as it existed in his time and formulated a rational theological explanation for it. But what happens

when the world changes?

The official Catholic Church has been grappling with that question for decades, since the founding and success of the State of Israel. Beginning with the Second Vatican Council in 1965 and continuing through subsequent papal statements, there has been a clear shift.

In 1980, Pope John Paul II referred to the Jewish people as “the people of God of the old covenant, which has never been revoked.”

In 2010, Pope Benedict XVI spoke of God’s ongoing faithfulness to Israel, noting that “the favor of the God of the covenant has always accompanied them.”

And in a landmark 2015 Vatican document, the Church stated explicitly that “God has never revoked his covenant with Israel” and that the Jewish people are “participants in God’s salvation.”

This is not Augustine. It is a significant theological shift – one that acknowledges a reality Augustine never faced: a restored Jewish people in their ancestral land. The Vatican has not fully resolved all the implications of this shift.

In fact, it openly admits the seemingly conflicted relationship between eternal Jewish covenantal status and Christian theology, calling it “an unfathomable divine mystery,” a direct reference to Paul’s own grappling with this exact question in the *Book of Romans*. But that admission itself expresses a willingness to confront the realities of history and adjust theological understanding accordingly.

Not everyone is willing to do that. The “traditional Catholic” voices now attacking Jews and Christian Zionists are, in many ways, trying to preserve Augustine’s framework intact. But they face an obvious obstacle: the facts on the ground contradict it. If the Jews of today are the Jews of biblical times – and if the covenant has not been revoked – then Augustine’s model of permanent exile collapses. Put simply, it is absurd to maintain that Augustine would have formulated his “witness theology” had he lived to see the current State of Israel.

But what about 1,500 years of Church doctrine? These “traditional” Christians have a workaround. Today’s Jews are not really the Jews. It follows that the return to Israel is meaningless, the State of Israel is biblically irrelevant, and the Augustinian tradition remains intact. This is why we are hearing these claims now. It is not simply antisemitism, though that may be part of it. It is an attempt to protect a theological system from a reality that threatens it.

At the heart of this conflict is the difference between theology and eschatology. Theology is about understanding God; people can disagree about theology indefinitely without resolution. A Jew and a Christian can hold fundamentally different views about God and still coexist peacefully. Eschatology, on the other hand, will come to head at some point. Eschatology is about how history unfolds – about what will happen in the end. And when two eschatological visions collide, history eventually renders a verdict.

For centuries, there were competing claims. One said that the Jews would remain in exile forever. The other – rooted in the Hebrew Bible and the stubborn faith of Jews everywhere – said that the Jewish people would one day return to their land. For most of history, that debate could remain theoretical. But no longer. History has spoken. The Jewish people have returned – and that forces a choice.

The Catholic Church, at its highest levels, has chosen to grapple with that reality – even if it means rethinking long-held assumptions. That is not a sign of weakness. It is a sign of intellectual and spiritual humility.

Others have chosen a different path. Rather than adjust their theology, they reject the reality: they deny that the Jews are the Jews, dismiss the State of Israel as insignificant, and attack those Christians who have drawn theological conclusions from the return of the Jewish people to the Promised Land.

But this reaction, however loud, cannot resolve the underlying tension. The question will not go away: If the Jewish people are still in covenant with God – and if they have returned to their land – what does that mean?

What may look like a fringe online argument is, in fact, something much deeper: a theological system confronting a reality it can no longer explain. And that is why this is not a sideshow at all. It is a theological crisis – one that is only just beginning to unfold. (Jerusalem Post Mar 29)