



(<https://paxpoint.org>)

Israel and Lebanon Were Never Destined to Be Enemies

Imagine Israelis spending a weekend in Beirut.

Lebanese (<https://paxpoint.org/a-historic-diplomatic-moment-israel-and-lebanon-hold-direct-talks-in-washington/>) tourists drinking beer in Tel Aviv.

Families driving north from Israel for lunch on the Mediterranean coast, while Lebanese visitors travel south to Jerusalem, Haifa and Jaffa.

For decades, this has sounded impossible.

But perhaps the most important question about Israel and Lebanon (<https://paxpoint.org/why-peace-between-lebanon-and-israel-and-disarming-hezbollah-is-in-americas-interests/>) is not why they should one day make peace.

It is why they are still enemies at all.

The two countries have no fundamental territorial dispute that requires permanent war. Their peoples share Mediterranean culture, food, history and an entrepreneurial spirit. Before Lebanon descended into

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civil war and became increasingly dominated by armed organizations, Beirut was one of the Middle East's great cosmopolitan cities. This website or its third-party tools process personal data. You can opt out of this processing at any time. [Click here to learn more](#).
Now there are your personal data that beneath the public hostility, clicking on the "Lebanese See My Personal Information" link.

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Israeli journalist and analyst Selena Ryan recently participated in a video inviting Lebanese civilians to come for beers in Tel Aviv and arak in Jaffa. Tel Aviv Deputy Mayor Guy Avner told Lebanese viewers that it was "only a matter of time" before peace arrived between the two





peoples. Ryan says the response has included numerous private messages from Lebanese citizens, including Shiites, expressing support for peace.
(<https://paxpoint.org>)

These messages are anecdotal, not an opinion poll. Lebanon remains deeply divided, and public opposition to normalization (<https://paxpoint.org/regional-peace-building/>) with Israel remains substantial.

But something important is happening.

The weakening of Hezbollah (<https://paxpoint.org/hezbollahs-unit-121-the-shadow-force-behind-political-violence-in-lebanon/>) has created an opportunity to ask a question that Iran and its proxies have spent decades trying to prevent Lebanese from asking:

What if Israel and Lebanon simply stopped being enemies?

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Key Takeaways

- Lebanese civilians have reportedly^[1] been privately contacting Israelis to express a desire for peace, even when they are afraid to say so publicly.
- Those messages include Lebanese Shiites^[2] seeking an alternative to Hezbollah's domination of their community.



- (<https://paxpoint.org>)
- New Shiite political movements^[2] are emphasizing Lebanese sovereignty and economic reform rather than Hezbollah's permanent confrontation with Israel.
 - Hezbollah's conflict with Israel has imposed enormous costs on Lebanon while advancing Iran's regional strategy.
 - Israel (<https://paxpoint.org/beyond-the-war-israel-still-seeks-enduring-regional-peace-as-the-end-goal/>) has no interest in permanently occupying Lebanon. Its overriding demand is that southern Lebanon not again become an Iranian-controlled military front.
 - A sovereign Lebanon capable of controlling its own territory (<https://paxpoint.org/israel-does-not-want-southern-lebanon-it-wants-peace-and-a-border-that-is-safe/>) would remove much of the underlying reason for Israeli military action there.
 - Peace could eventually offer enormous economic opportunities in tourism, trade, energy, technology and regional integration.
 - The most important divide may increasingly be between Lebanese (<https://paxpoint.org/israel-is-showing-that-security-not-territory-was-always-the-goal/>) who want a functioning country and Hezbollah's insistence that Lebanon remain part of Iran's war against Israel.

Why Are Israel and Lebanon Enemies?

This question is asked surprisingly rarely.

Israel and Lebanon do not possess some eternal religious or civilizational reason to fight each other.

Israel does not claim Beirut.

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It does not want Tripoli.

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Do not attack us.

For decades, however, Lebanon has repeatedly become a platform from which others have attacked Israel.



First Palestinian terrorist organizations established what amounted to a state within a state in southern Lebanon.
(<https://paxpoint.org>)

Then Hezbollah emerged.

And Hezbollah gradually became something extraordinary: an armed organization possessing military capabilities beyond those of the Lebanese state itself, operating according to an ideological and strategic agenda deeply connected to Iran.

The result was predictable.

Lebanon became a battlefield.

Hezbollah's War Was Never Really Lebanon's War

This distinction matters enormously.

Hezbollah presents itself as Lebanon's resistance.

But resistance against what?

Israel withdrew its forces from southern Lebanon in 2000.

Instead of allowing the border to become peaceful, Hezbollah continued building an enormous military infrastructure.

Tens of thousands of rockets and missiles were accumulated.

Tunnels were constructed.

Fighters were trained.

Villages became embedded within a military system designed for
We value your privacy Israel.

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The Lebanese people received the consequences.

When Hezbollah attacked Israel, Israel responded.

When Hezbollah positioned military infrastructure in civilian areas, those areas became battlefields.



When Hezbollah decided to open another front following [October 7](https://paxpoint.org/stories-of-resilience/) (<https://paxpoint.org/stories-of-resilience/>), ordinary Lebanese civilians again paid the price.

This is the central tragedy of modern Lebanon.

A beautiful country with extraordinary human potential has repeatedly been forced to serve somebody else's war.

Iran Needs Israel and Lebanon to Remain Enemies

For [Tehran](https://paxpoint.org/irans-unreasonable-ceasefire-demands-why-tehrans-conditions-undermine-peace-efforts/) (<https://paxpoint.org/irans-unreasonable-ceasefire-demands-why-tehrans-conditions-undermine-peace-efforts/>), permanent hostility between Israel and Lebanon makes strategic sense.

A peaceful Lebanese-Israeli border would represent a devastating defeat for Iran's regional project.

Hezbollah provides Tehran with military pressure against Israel without requiring Iranian soldiers to occupy the battlefield themselves.

Lebanese territory becomes strategic depth.

Lebanese villages become launching grounds.

Lebanese politics protects Hezbollah's military autonomy.

And Lebanese civilians absorb the consequences when war comes.

Peace would destroy much of that architecture.

A Lebanon at peace with Israel would have little reason to tolerate an independent army controlled by an organization taking strategic guidance from Tehran.

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Something May Be Changing Among Lebanese Shiites

Perhaps the most interesting part of the recent reporting concerns Lebanon's Shiite population.



It would be easy, and wrong, to assume that every Lebanese Shiite supports Hezbollah.
(<https://paxpoint.org>)

Ryan says she has received numerous private messages from Shiites expressing interest in peace and opposition to Hezbollah. She describes people attempting to build an alternative political identity based not primarily upon Israel, but upon Lebanon itself.

Groups such as the Change Movement in the South have focused on strengthening a Lebanese Shiite identity independent of Hezbollah and emphasizing sovereignty and economic reform.

That could ultimately prove far more consequential than any Israeli military operation.

Hezbollah can survive Israeli airstrikes.

What it cannot easily survive is losing the belief among Lebanese Shiites that Hezbollah represents their interests.

If Lebanese citizens increasingly conclude that Iran's regional ambitions are destroying their own country, the political foundations of Hezbollah begin to weaken.

The Silent Lebanese Matter

There is another fascinating element to Ryan's experience.

She says the Lebanese who hate Israel frequently have no hesitation expressing themselves publicly.

Those who want peace are often quieter.

They message privately.

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That makes intuitive sense.

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So social media may provide a distorted picture.

The loudest voices are not necessarily the most representative.



This does not mean a hidden majority of Lebanese currently supports peace with Israel. There is insufficient evidence to make that claim.
(<https://paxpoint.org>)

But it does mean we should be careful about assuming that decades of official hostility represent the permanent wishes of every Lebanese citizen.

People sometimes say privately what politics prevents them from saying publicly.

We Have Seen Impossible Peace Before

There is a tendency to assume that today's enemies will remain enemies forever.

Middle Eastern history repeatedly demonstrates otherwise.

Egypt fought multiple wars against Israel.

Thousands of Egyptians and Israelis died.

Then Anwar Sadat (<https://paxpoint.org/camp-david-accords/>), came to Jerusalem.

Israel returned the Sinai Peninsula.

The countries signed a peace treaty.

Jordan once participated in wars against Israel.

Today the countries have maintained peace for more than three decades.

The United Arab Emirates had no diplomatic relations with Israel.
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Then came the Abraham Accords (<https://paxpoint.org/abraham-accords/>).
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Suddenly Israelis were flying to Dubai, Emiratis were visiting Israel and businesses were signing agreements.

Things that appear politically impossible can become normal remarkably quickly once leadership changes the framework.

Lebanon could eventually be another example.

Imagine What Peace Could Mean



(<https://paxpoint.org>)

The economic possibilities alone are enormous.

Lebanon desperately needs investment, infrastructure and economic recovery.

Israel possesses one of the world's most dynamic technology sectors.

Lebanon has extraordinary tourism potential.

Israel sends millions of travelers abroad.

The two countries are geographically tiny and extraordinarily close.

Agriculture.

Water technology.

Medicine.

Cybersecurity.

Energy.

Tourism.

Trade.

Universities.

Startups.

Imagine Beirut and Tel Aviv not as cities separated by a military frontier, but as two Mediterranean economic centers connected by commerce.

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Imagine Israelis visiting the cedars and Lebanese Christians visiting Jerusalem without traveling through third countries.

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Imagine Lebanese entrepreneurs meeting Israeli investors.

clicking on the "Do Not Sell or Share My Personal

Information" link.

Imagine direct flights taking minutes rather than citizens of both

countries treating each other as inhabitants of another universe.

The geography makes conflict absurd.

Peace makes considerably more sense.



Israel Does Not Need Lebanon to Love It

(<https://paxpoint.org>)

Nor does peace require Lebanese society suddenly to become Zionist.

Egyptians do not have to love Israel for the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty to save lives.

Jordanians do not need to agree with Israeli policy for the border to remain largely peaceful.

Peace begins with something much more modest.

Acceptance.

You live there.

We live here.

We disagree about history.

We disagree about politics.

But we are not going to kill each other.

That would be revolutionary enough.

Peace Through Lebanese Sovereignty

There is one prerequisite.

Lebanon has to become Lebanon again.

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A sovereign country cannot contain two armies with separate chains of command and separate foreign policies.

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The Lebanese Armed Forces must ultimately control Lebanese territory.

Weapons should belong to the state.

Decisions about war and peace should be made in Beirut, not Tehran.



(<https://paxpoint.org>) That is not an Israeli demand imposed upon Lebanon.

It is the basic definition of Lebanese sovereignty.

And it is precisely where Israeli and Lebanese interests overlap.

Israel wants Hezbollah away from its border.

Lebanese nationalists want their country returned to Lebanese control.

Those objectives are not contradictory.

They are complementary.

Israel Must Leave When the Threat Leaves

Israel also has responsibilities.

If Lebanon demonstrates that its army can control the south, dismantle Hezbollah's independent military infrastructure and prevent attacks against Israel, Israel should have no reason to maintain forces on Lebanese territory.

The principle should be straightforward.

Security first.

Verification second.

Withdrawal follows.

Israel's goal should not be permanent occupation.

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It should be a border that no longer requires Israeli soldiers to defend it from inside Lebanon.

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The strongest argument for Israeli withdrawal is therefore not clicking on the "Do Not Sell or Share My Personal Information" link.

It is Lebanese sovereignty that actually works.



(<https://paxpoint.org>)

The Next Abraham Accord Could Be Closer Than We Think

A peace agreement tomorrow is unlikely.

Lebanon's politics remain complicated.

Hezbollah remains armed.

Public hostility toward Israel remains significant.

The wounds of recent wars are deep.

None of this should be romanticized.

But peace often begins before governments acknowledge it.

It begins when people start questioning assumptions.

When an Israeli says to a Lebanese, "Come have a beer in Tel Aviv."

When a Lebanese citizen quietly responds, "I would like to."

When Shiites begin asking whether Hezbollah actually represents them.

When Lebanese citizens start distinguishing between their country's interests and Iran's interests.

When Israelis begin imagining Beirut as somewhere to visit rather than somewhere missiles come from.

These are tiny changes.

Until suddenly they aren't.

We value your privacy Conclusion

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They are not.

There is no law of history requiring rockets to cross this border forever.



There is no ancient commandment requiring Israelis and Lebanese to kill one another.
(<https://paxpoint.org>)

There is no reason Lebanese children should grow up fearing Israeli aircraft or Israeli children should grow up running to shelters because Hezbollah decided Iran needed another confrontation.

There is another future available.

A Lebanon sovereign over its own territory.

A Hezbollah disarmed as an independent military force.

An Israel secure on its northern border.

Trade instead of tunnels.

Tourists instead of rockets.

Beers in Tel Aviv.

Arak in Jaffa.

Dinner in Beirut.

That future may still seem distant.

But almost every peace agreement looks impossible until shortly before it happens.

And perhaps the most hopeful sign is that some Lebanese appear to be asking the same question Israelis should be asking:

If this war primarily serves Iran, why are Israelis and Lebanese still fighting it?

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The day Lebanon can answer that question freely may be the day one of the Middle East's most unnecessary conflicts finally begins to end.

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- Footnotes**
1. <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/article-906440>
(<https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/article-906440>). 1
 2. <https://www.israelhayom.com/2026/08/29/what-lebanons-shiites-dont-tell-you-about-hezbollah/>

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(<https://paxpoint.org>)
3. <https://thisisbeirut.com.lb/features/focus/who-are-the-shia-opposition-seeking-to-break-hezbollahs-stranglehold>
(<https://thisisbeirut.com.lb/features/focus/who-are-the-shia-opposition-seeking-to-break-hezbollahs-stranglehold>). 1



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When Iranian State Television Discusses How to Kill the President's Son, Believe the Threat

There is inflammatory rhetoric, and then there is something altogether more disturbing.

Iranian state television recently aired a roughly three-minute segment focused on Barron Trump, the 20-year-old son of the president of the United States. The program reportedly displayed locations associated with him, depicted efforts to map his movements and social connections, discussed penetrating the security surrounding him and referred to a \$10 million reward.

The accompanying government-linked website Tebyān reportedly gave the video an even more chilling title: **"Where and How Should We Kill Barron Trump?"**

The U.S. Secret Service has confirmed that it is aware of the broadcast and investigates anything that could constitute a threat against its protectees.

Iran's senior security official Mohsen Rezaei has subsequently dismissed reports of an assassination plot as a lie. That distinction matters: the operational claims presented in the broadcast have not

been independently verified, and there is no public evidence establishing that an actual attempt to reach Barron Trump has succeeded.

But that does not make the episode harmless.

The significant fact is that **Iranian state media itself broadcast material discussing how the American president's son could be reached and killed.**

This is not fundamentally an Israel story.

It is an America story.

It demonstrates once again that the Islamic Republic's confrontation is not confined to Israel. Tehran's hostility extends directly toward the United States, its leaders and, increasingly, their families.

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Key Takeaways

- Iranian state television aired a segment^[1] focused on targeting Barron Trump, including purported information concerning his movements and locations.
- A government-linked Iranian website^[2] reportedly promoted the segment under a headline asking where and how Barron Trump should be killed.

- The broadcast^[3] referred to a \$10 million reward and claimed that people would be willing to pursue it.
- The U.S. Secret Service says it is aware of the video and investigates perceived threats against those under its protection.
- The episode follows previous Iranian state-linked threats (<https://cognitura.org/blog/behind-the-front-groups-how-iran-uses-fake-organizations-to-target-civilians-around-the-world>) directed at President Trump and members of his family, including Melania Trump.
- U.S. authorities have previously alleged actual Iranian (<https://cognitura.org/blog/irans-war-is-not-against-jews-alone-it-is-against-anyone-who-stands-in-its-way>) assassination plots against American officials, meaning Tehran's threatening rhetoric cannot simply be dismissed as theatrical propaganda.
- The incident demonstrates why the challenge posed by the Islamic Republic (<https://cognitura.org/blog/a-funeral-that-exposed-irans-terror-priorities>) extends far beyond its confrontation with Israel.

This Is the President's Son

Start with the most basic fact.

Barron Trump does not make American policy toward Iran.

He does not command the U.S. military.

He did not order attacks against Iranian targets.

He is the president's son.

Yet Iranian state television chose to devote a segment to discussing his vulnerability.

That represents an alarming escalation in the logic of political intimidation.

A state has moved from threatening the leader of an adversarial country to broadcasting material about potentially killing that leader's child.

Whatever one's politics, that should be regarded as unacceptable.

Democrat or Republican.

Trump supporter or Trump opponent.

American or European.

There should be nothing partisan about condemning a foreign state broadcaster discussing how the American president's son might be killed.

This Was Not Some Anonymous Social-Media Account

That distinction is crucial.

The internet contains millions of deranged people.

An anonymous account making a threat is disturbing, but it does not necessarily tell us anything about a government.

Iranian state television is different.

The Islamic Republic maintains extensive control over broadcasting. This material was transmitted through the country's state media environment and subsequently amplified through government-linked outlets.

That does not prove Iran's government has authorized an operational assassination plan.

But it does mean the rhetoric cannot be dismissed as the ravings of an isolated extremist.

Somebody produced the segment.

Somebody approved it.

Somebody broadcast it.

And millions of people could potentially see it.

The Video Went Beyond Saying "Death to America"

Iranian revolutionary rhetoric has included hostility toward the United States for decades.

"Death to America" became so familiar that much of the world learned to treat it as background noise.

This was different.

The Barron Trump segment reportedly displayed locations and online platforms, depicted surveillance activity and attempts to map people around him, and discussed the possibility of overcoming the security protecting him.

Iran International, importantly, could not independently verify those operational claims and reported that much of the presentation relied upon dramatized graphics.

That qualification should be stated clearly.

But the problem remains.

Even if every supposed intelligence claim in the video were fictional, why would a state broadcaster produce a dramatized guide to assassinating the American president's son?

The propaganda itself is threatening.

This Is Part of a Pattern

Nor did the episode emerge from nowhere.

Iranian state-linked media has previously threatened Donald Trump and members of his family.

In July, the IRGC-linked Tasnim news agency reportedly circulated a video discussing Melania Trump's movements and places she frequented, while ending with a warning directed toward Barron.

Earlier threats have targeted Trump himself.

And Iranian officials have repeatedly threatened retaliation against Americans over the 2020 killing of Quds Force commander Qasem Soleimani.

Former IRGC commander Mohsen Rezaee, for example, warned Trump in March that if America targeted Iranian infrastructure, retaliation would go beyond an "eye for an eye."

Again and again, violence is not merely threatened abstractly.

Individuals are named.

America Has Already Uncovered Iranian Assassination Plots

This is why the latest broadcast cannot simply be laughed away.

American authorities have previously accused Iran of moving beyond rhetoric.

U.S. prosecutors have alleged Iranian plots targeting former National Security Adviser John Bolton and other American officials.

In 2024, the Justice Department disclosed charges involving an alleged Iranian-directed plot to assassinate Donald Trump.

Whether every Iranian threat becomes operational is beside the point.

Some allegedly have.

When a government associated with previous assassination plots allows its media to discuss killing the president's son, prudent governments pay attention.

The Secret Service clearly does.

The Islamic Republic Has Long Operated Beyond Iran's Borders

There is a broader misconception about Iran that this episode helps expose.

The Islamic Republic is sometimes discussed as though the principal danger it poses concerns Israel.

Israel is certainly one of Tehran's primary enemies.

But Tehran's confrontation has always been broader.

The regime defines the United States as the central power behind the regional and international order it seeks to overturn.

Iranian-backed militias have attacked American forces.

Iran has supported organizations threatening international shipping.

American officials have been targeted in alleged assassination plots.

Dissidents have faced threats abroad.

And Iranian-linked networks have been accused of using criminal organizations to target enemies in Europe.

Israel is on the front line.

It is not the end of the line.

“Death to America” Was Never Really About Israel

For decades, crowds at regime-organized events in Iran have chanted two slogans together:

“Death to Israel.”

And “Death to America.”

Western observers sometimes behave as though only the first should be taken seriously.

Why?

The Islamic Republic’s ideology has consistently portrayed America as the “Great Satan” and Israel as the “Little Satan.”

Those terms themselves reveal the hierarchy.

Israel is regarded as America’s regional ally.

America is viewed as the greater ideological and geopolitical adversary.

That matters enormously when Americans debate whether Iran is fundamentally Israel’s problem.

Tehran itself has repeatedly provided the answer.

Israel and America Face the Same Revolutionary Regime

This is one reason the U.S.-Israel alliance matters.

Israel confronts many manifestations of Iranian power before they reach other Western countries.

Iranian missiles.

Iranian drones.

Hezbollah (<https://cognitura.org/blog/when-terrorists-are-called-journalists-media-labels-hezbollah-and-the-risks-to-truth>).

Other Iranian-backed armed organizations.

Cyberattacks.

Terrorist networks.

Israel has consequently accumulated enormous intelligence and operational knowledge concerning how the Islamic Republic and its proxies operate.

That knowledge is valuable to America because the adversary is shared.

The latest threats make that difficult to deny.

A regime whose state media discusses assassinating the American president's son cannot credibly be described as merely engaged in a territorial disagreement with Israel.

Negotiations Cannot Require Amnesia

None of this means diplomacy with Iran should be impossible.

Countries negotiate with hostile governments precisely because they are hostile.

If negotiations can verifiably prevent nuclear proliferation, constrain missile programs or reduce regional warfare, diplomacy has value.

But negotiations must begin with a realistic understanding of the negotiating partner.

Wishful thinking is not diplomacy.

Iran's leaders should be judged not merely by what their diplomats say at negotiating tables but by what the state does elsewhere.

What does its military do?

What do its proxies do?

What do its intelligence services do?

What does its state media broadcast?

A government cannot demand that the world regard it as a normal international actor while its media ecosystem discusses murdering the family members of another country's president.

The Threat Is Bigger Than One Family

Ultimately, this is not about Donald Trump or Barron Trump.

It is about what kind of behavior the international system is prepared to normalize.

Imagine Russian state television broadcasting a detailed segment examining how the child of an American president might be assassinated.

Imagine Chinese state television doing it.

Imagine the official broadcaster of any Western government discussing a multimillion-dollar reward for killing the son of a foreign leader.

There would rightly be outrage.

Iran should not receive a different standard because decades of revolutionary rhetoric have made the extraordinary seem ordinary.

Conclusion

The operational claims contained in the Iranian broadcast remain unverified.

That should be acknowledged.

But the broadcast itself is real enough that the U.S. Secret Service publicly confirmed it was aware of it.

Iranian state television aired material centered on how Barron Trump could potentially be reached. A government-linked website reportedly promoted it under a title asking where and how he should be killed. A \$10 million reward was invoked.

That should tell America something important.

The Islamic Republic's confrontation is not merely with Israel.

It is not merely about Gaza.

It is not merely about Palestinian statehood.

It is not merely a disagreement over nuclear centrifuges.

For decades, the revolutionary regime has explicitly identified America itself as an enemy.

When Iranian officials threaten Americans, listen.

When Iranian-backed organizations attack Americans, respond.

And when Iranian state media starts discussing where the American president's son can be found and killed, do not explain it away as colorful Middle Eastern rhetoric.

Take the regime seriously.

Because one of the most dangerous mistakes democracies repeatedly make with extremist regimes is assuming they cannot possibly mean the things they repeatedly tell us they mean.

When a hostile state starts broadcasting ideas about how to murder an American president's son, America should believe the threat long before it has to mourn the consequences.

I can also monitor Iranian state-media threats against U.S. officials and alert you when there is a significant new development.

Footnotes

1. <https://www.memri.org/tv/iranian-where-to-kill-barron-trump-assassination-guidance> (<https://www.memri.org/tv/iranian-where-to-kill-barron-trump-assassination-guidance>). ¹
2. <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202608247954> (<https://www.iranintl.com/en/202608247954>). ¹
3. <https://edition.cnn.com/2026/08/24/politics/iran-barron-trump-threat-intl-hnk> (<https://edition.cnn.com/2026/08/24/politics/iran-barron-trump-threat-intl-hnk>). ¹

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Gaza's New Nutrition Data Demands a Reckoning With the Famine Narrative



AUGUST 30, 2026

A year ago, the word **"famine"** became one of the most powerful weapons in the international case against Israel.

The declaration was repeated across front pages, television networks, social media, international institutions and political speeches. Israel was accused not simply of fighting a brutal war in densely populated Gaza, but of deliberately starving Palestinians. The allegation helped transform international perceptions of the conflict and became central to accusations that Israel was committing the gravest possible crimes.

Now there is new data.

And it raises questions that deserve answers.

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A UNICEF-led population survey conducted across accessible areas of Gaza found **just 0.5 percent of children suffering from wasting**, the technical term for acute malnutrition. The survey itself concluded that wasting was low across the areas studied and that there was no widespread acute malnutrition at the population level.



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UNICEF's official release subsequently described acute malnutrition among children under five as "low."

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This is not Israeli government data.

It is not an IDF assessment.

It is not research commissioned by a pro-Israel organization.

It comes from a UNICEF-led survey using the standardized SMART methodology employed internationally to assess nutrition during humanitarian emergencies.

The findings cannot simply be projected backward to prove what conditions were in Gaza a year earlier. UNICEF stresses that the survey measured conditions between May 31 and June 15, 2026, after humanitarian and commercial supplies had increased substantially following the October 2025 ceasefire.

That qualification matters.

But so does the data.

Because after two years in which some of the world's most influential institutions repeatedly warned of imminent or actual mass starvation, Gaza now has population-level nutrition data dramatically different from the picture many people around the world were led to believe.

That should prompt more than celebration that conditions have improved.

It should prompt a serious examination of how the original famine narrative was constructed.

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Key Takeaways

- A UNICEF-led SMART survey^[1] conducted between May 31 and June 15, 2026, measured 1,335 children across 147 clusters in accessible areas of Gaza.
- The survey found wasting, or acute malnutrition, at approximately **0.5 percent**, concluding (https://factsignal.org/verified-evidence-documentation/the-latest-un-data-on-gaza-nutrition-shows-that-truth-will-always-prevail) that there was no widespread acute malnutrition at the population level in the areas studied.
- Chronic malnutrition (https://factsignal.org/verified-evidence-documentation/understanding-the-humanitarian-crisis-in-gaza-israeli-and-hamas-roles), or stunting, affected 12.2 percent of children under five, while UNICEF also documented poor diets, maternal malnutrition and significant childhood illness.

- The survey^[2] covered areas containing approximately 83 percent of Gaza's population; roughly 358,000 people were excluded because of security and access restrictions.

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- The IPC declared famine in Gaza Governorate in August 2025 and projected that 132,000 children under five would suffer acute malnutrition through June 2026, including more than 41,000 severe cases.
- The new survey^[3] cannot establish nutritional conditions during the summer of 2025 because acute malnutrition can change rapidly and humanitarian access improved substantially after the October ceasefire.
- Nevertheless, the enormous gap between some previous projections and the population-level picture measured in June 2026 warrants rigorous

examination.

- The issue is not whether Gazans suffered terribly. They unquestionably did.

The question is whether some of the most consequential claims

(https://factsignal.org/disinformation-media-analysis/understanding-the-complexities-of-gaza-casualty-reporting) made about that suffering were

supported by evidence sufficiently strong to justify the certainty with which

they were presented.

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The Number That Should Stop Everyone

The most striking finding is 0.5 percent.

That was the approximate prevalence of wasting among young children identified by the UNICEF-led survey.

Wasting is particularly important because it reflects acute malnutrition rather than longer-term nutritional problems.

The Free Press compared the result with international nutrition data and found Gaza's measured rate was exceptionally low by regional standards.

That does not mean Gaza's children are universally healthy.

Far from it.

UNICEF found that 12.2 percent of children under five suffered from stunting, which reflects accumulated nutritional and health problems over time. Only 22.4 percent of children aged six to 23 months received what UNICEF defines as a minimum acceptable diet. More than a third of children under five had experienced diarrhea during the preceding two weeks.

These are serious humanitarian problems.

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What the World Was Told in 2025

Now compare the new findings with the predictions made a year earlier.

In August 2025, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, or IPC, officially confirmed famine in Gaza Governorate "with reasonable evidence."

More than half a million Gazans were classified as facing catastrophic conditions characterized by starvation, destitution and death.



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The accompanying acute-malnutrition assessment projected that through June 2025, at least 132,000 children under five would suffer acute malnutrition, including more than 41,000 severe cases.



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"Famine" was no longer presented as a possibility.

It was declared.

Israel rejected the assessment and challenged aspects of the methodology and evidence.

Much of the international response treated those objections as an attempt to evade responsibility.

Now we have reached June 2026, the endpoint of those projections, and UNICEF's first comprehensive population-based survey presents a strikingly different snapshot.

That discrepancy deserves investigation.

But We Need to Be Precise About What the Survey Proves

There is an important temptation that should be resisted.

The new figures do not automatically prove that the 2025 famine declaration was false.

UNICEF explicitly warns against using them that way.

The SMART survey is cross-sectional. It measures nutritional conditions during a particular period.

It cannot tell us retrospectively what wasting rates were eight or ten months earlier.

Conditions also changed dramatically.

Following the October 2025 ceasefire, humanitarian assistance and commercial traffic expanded. UNICEF says admissions for treatment of acute malnutrition, which peaked at nearly 17,000 children in August 2025, had fallen below 3,000 by March

2026.

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Acute malnutrition can improve surprisingly quickly when food and medical

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So the intellectually credible argument is not:

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It is:

"The new evidence raises serious questions about previous claims and projections, and those questions deserve the same scrutiny that Israel received when the accusations were originally made."

That argument is considerably harder to dismiss.

Predictions Are Not Measurements

There is another important distinction.

Much of the international discussion of Gaza repeatedly blurred the difference between predictions and observed reality.

Humanitarian organizations understandably model what might happen if conditions continue deteriorating.

That is useful.

Governments need warnings before people begin dying rather than afterward.

But projections have uncertainty.

A projection that hundreds of thousands of people **could** experience catastrophic food insecurity is not evidence that hundreds of thousands **did** starve.

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A forecast that tens of thousands of children **will** become acutely malnourished

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When predictions prove accurate, confidence in the methodology increases.

When they do not, researchers ask why.

Gaza Became a Global Information Battlefield



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The problem is that Gaza's humanitarian statistics were never merely technical.



They became political ammunition.

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Claims about famine were used to characterize Israel as deliberately starving civilians.

They appeared in demonstrations.

They were invoked by governments.

They became part of international legal arguments.

They influenced public opinion throughout Europe and America.

Images of visibly emaciated Palestinian children circulated globally, sometimes without sufficient information about underlying medical conditions.

The accusation was extraordinarily powerful because starvation carries a particular moral horror.

That places an even greater responsibility on organizations making such assessments.

The more consequential the allegation, the stronger the evidentiary standards should be.

Where Were the Population-Level Surveys?

The Free Press report raises an especially important methodological issue: the quality of the evidence available during the period in which famine was declared.

Conducting representative surveys inside an active war zone is extraordinarily difficult.

Researchers cannot simply walk safely into every neighborhood and randomly measure children.

Population displacement changes constantly.

Some areas are inaccessible.

Families move.

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Hospitals collapse.



Data collection becomes dangerous.

Those limitations are understandable.

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But acknowledging why high-quality evidence is difficult to obtain does not make
lower-quality evidence equivalent to high-quality evidence.

The 2026 SMART survey is important precisely because it is a structured
population-based assessment.

It measured 1,335 children across 147 clusters.

That is substantially different from extrapolating population-wide conditions from
selected clinical admissions or incomplete screening data.

There Are Limits to the New Survey Too

Credibility requires acknowledging the limitations on both sides.

Approximately 17 percent of Gaza's population, around 358,000 people, was
excluded from the sampling frame because researchers could not safely access
those areas.

The findings therefore cannot simply be declared representative of every person in
Gaza.

UNICEF itself describes them as representative of the **accessible population**.

That caveat matters.

But the reverse is equally true.

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One cannot simply assume that conditions among the inaccessible 17 percent were
catastrophically worse without evidence.

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The appropriate response is uncertainty.

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Not political certainty in whichever direction suits one's argument.

Israel's Objections Deserve Another Look



Throughout the war, Israel repeatedly challenged claims that it was deliberately starving Gaza. (<https://factsignal.org>)



Israeli officials pointed to the enormous quantities of food entering the territory.

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They argued that distribution inside Gaza was a major part of the problem.

They pointed to looting, Hamas control, damaged infrastructure, collapsing markets and the difficulty of delivering humanitarian assistance inside an active battlefield.

None of that means Israel made every correct decision regarding humanitarian access.

Nor does it prove that Israeli restrictions never contributed to shortages.

But the new evidence should make journalists and international organizations more willing to revisit Israeli arguments that were frequently dismissed as propaganda.

Sometimes Israel might actually be right.

That possibility should not be controversial.

The Missing Distinction: Hunger Is Not Famine

Gaza has unquestionably experienced hunger.

Families have struggled to obtain food.

Food prices have soared.

Children have suffered poor diets.

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People have been displaced repeatedly.

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But humanitarian terminology exists for a reason.

Food insecurity is not automatically famine.

Hunger is not automatically starvation.

Poor dietary diversity is not automatically acute malnutrition.

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Chronic malnutrition is not the same measurement as wasting.



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And famine is not simply another word for terrible humanitarian conditions.

When these terms become interchangeable in journalism and political advocacy,

understanding becomes impossible.

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Where Is the Reckoning?

This is ultimately the most important question.

Imagine the reverse situation.

Suppose Israel had produced data claiming that acute malnutrition was virtually nonexistent, and one year later UNICEF conducted a rigorous population survey showing catastrophic wasting throughout Gaza.

The discrepancy would rightly become international news.

Journalists would ask how Israel got its numbers so wrong.

Investigations would follow.

Officials would be challenged.

Every previous Israeli statement would be reexamined.

That is exactly how accountability should work.

But the same principle must apply to international institutions.

If previous projections differ dramatically from subsequent measurements, ask why.

Perhaps humanitarian intervention prevented the projected outcome.

Perhaps conditions changed rapidly after the ceasefire.

Perhaps the earlier data was accurate for the period measured.

Perhaps methodological limitations exaggerated the scale of the crisis.

Perhaps several of these explanations are simultaneously true.

Find out.

The Greatest Victim of Exaggeration Is the Truth



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There is also a danger for humanitarian organizations themselves.



Their greatest asset is credibility.
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If every warning becomes maximalist, eventually people stop listening.

If "famine" becomes synonymous with severe food insecurity, the word loses its meaning.

If predictions are presented as facts and never revisited, public confidence deteriorates.

And then when a genuine famine occurs somewhere else, the warnings may carry less weight.

That would be disastrous.

Humanitarian organizations should therefore be among those most interested in examining discrepancies openly.

Conclusion

The new UNICEF-led nutrition survey does not prove that nobody starved in Gaza.

It does not prove that humanitarian conditions were acceptable.

They plainly were not.

It does not establish what conditions were during the worst months of 2025.

And it does not negate the serious nutritional and health problems UNICEF continues to document.

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A population-based survey covering accessible areas containing approximately 83 percent of Gaza's population found acute malnutrition among young children to be low, with wasting around 0.5 percent.

That comes after a year in which the world was told Gaza was experiencing famine and in which projections anticipated extraordinary numbers of acutely malnourished children through June 2026.



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Those facts can coexist only if we are willing to ask difficult questions about timing, methodology, changing conditions and the distinction between projections and observed outcomes.

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Israel was subjected to extraordinary condemnation when the famine allegations were made.

If better evidence now complicates the narrative, intellectual honesty requires examining that evidence with equal intensity.

Not because Palestinian suffering was imaginary.

It wasn't.

Not because every Israeli decision was correct.

It wasn't.

But because accusations as serious as deliberately starving a civilian population cannot be governed by politics.

They have to be governed by evidence.

And there should be no pro-Israel standard or pro-Palestinian standard for that evidence.

There should be one standard.

If the accusation made headlines around the world, the evidence that challenges it deserves headlines too.

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<https://www.thefp.com/p/unicef-data-undermines-claims-palestine-israel-famine-united-nations> (<https://www.thefp.com/p/unicef-data-undermines-claims-palestine-israel-famine-united-nations>) ↑

2 <https://www.jns.org/news/world/new-gaza-nutrition-data-from-unicef-shows-truth-always-prevails-akunis-says>



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(<https://www.jns.org/news/world/new-gaza-nutrition-data-from-unicef-shows-truth-always-prevails-akunis-says>) ↑



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3 <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/article-904834>

(<https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/article-904834>) ↑

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Tracing the Roots of Judaism and Christianity in the Land of Israel

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Specific locations, archaeological evidence, Christianity's continuing presence in the land, shared concepts, religious differences, and common questions help clarify the documented depth of these connections while preserving the distinct identity of both traditions.

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What "Judeo-Christian Roots" Means



(<https://culturavia.org>)

The phrase "Judeo-Christian" roots describes historical and religious connections between Judaism and Christianity. It points to the Hebrew Scriptures, biblical narratives, and ethical ideas that shaped Christian teaching and influenced American civic culture, including human dignity, justice, and accountability. These shared moral ideas also help explain the spiritual background of the U.S.-Israel relationship, as explored in our history of U.S.-Israel Judeo-Christian connections (<https://culturavia.org/the-judeo-christian-roots-of-the-u-s-israel-relationship/>).

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In relation to Israel, the term recognizes the land's central place in Jewish history and the significance of Jerusalem and other sites in Christian traditions. This shared heritage does not mean Judaism and Christianity are identical or require agreement on every political question.

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A thoughtful approach pairs historical context with cultural sensitivity, making room for Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and other experiences connected to the land. It offers a starting point for learning, not a complete account of every community. Reliable sources, dialogue, and firsthand experience can deepen understanding and build bridges.

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Ancient Israel and the Origins of Judaism

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Judaism developed over many centuries, rooted in the history, traditions, and texts of the ancient Israelites. These communities emerged in the land of Israel during the second millennium and first millennium BCE, shaped by shared practices, Hebrew language, ancestral narratives, and covenantal ideas. The Hebrew Bible preserves central accounts of this heritage, while archaeology and other ancient records provide essential historical context. For a broader discussion of this enduring connection, see our overview of Jewish indigeneity, identity, and continuity (<https://culturavia.org/the-jewish-people-and-the-land-of-israel-a-relationship-built-on-indigeneity-history-identity-and-continuity/>).

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The Kingdoms of Israel and Judah

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According to biblical tradition, Israel's early monarchy is linked with Saul, David, and Solomon. After this period, the united kingdom divided into two neighboring states: the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. Their histories involved political change, regional conflict, cultural exchange, and developing religious practices. Jewish civilization formed in this land over thousands of years, with Jewish communities maintaining a continued presence there even under foreign rule.

Judah remained closely connected to Jerusalem, which became its political and spiritual center. The city's significance grew with the establishment of the First Temple, traditionally attributed to Solomon. Following the Babylonian conquest and the Temple's destruction in the sixth century BCE, Jewish communities preserved their identity through worship, learning, law, and communal memory. The later rebuilding of the Temple further solidified Jerusalem as a central place in Jewish history.

Key Takeaways

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This foundation explains the enduring connection between the Jewish people, the land of Israel, and Jerusalem. Studying these origins supports meaningful engagement with Jewish history and the broader U.S.-Israel relationship.

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Jerusalem, the Temple, and Jewish Religious Life



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Jerusalem as a Sacred and Civic Center

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In the Hebrew Bible, King David establishes Jerusalem as ancient Israel's political capital and enhances its religious significance by bringing the Ark of the Covenant there. The city then becomes a center of national identity, worship, and collective memory.

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His son, King Solomon, further solidifies this role by constructing the First Temple. In the biblical narrative, the Temple becomes the focus of prayer, sacrifices, priestly service, and pilgrimage, explaining Jerusalem's lasting place in Jewish identity and faith. Its significance also extends into public life today, as the capital's markets, neighborhoods, archaeological sites, and civic spaces (/education-and-exchange) reflect its historical and cultural reporting, as explored in our examination of Jerusalem's enduring openness to the world (<https://culturavia.org/despite-the-headlines-the-world-still-comes-to-jerusalem/>).

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The Temple's Continuing Significance

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Babylon's destruction of the First Temple in the sixth century BCE marks a crucial turning point. The Second Temple was later constructed and expanded under Herod the Great before its destruction by Rome in 70 CE. Although the Temple no longer stands, its legacy endures in Jewish liturgy, festivals, education, and daily prayer.

News

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The Western Wall, a surviving section of the Temple's retaining wall, remains a vital site for Jewish prayer and contemplation. Understanding Jerusalem's history necessitates sensitivity to its significance across faiths, fostering informed dialogue about shared heritage while recognizing the city's complex, overlapping narratives.

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The Second Temple Period's Influence

The Second Temple period provides essential context for understanding how Christianity emerged. It generally refers to the centuries between the rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple after the Babylonian exile and the Temple's destruction by Rome in 70 CE. During this time, Jewish communities preserved their traditions while responding to changing political powers, languages, and cultural influences.

Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Contexts

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During Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman rule, Jerusalem developed within an imperial system that allowed communities to maintain religious practices while rebuilding institutions in Jerusalem. Later, Hellenistic rulers brought Greek language, education, and civic customs across the eastern Mediterranean. These influences shaped the settings in which Jewish texts were read and interpreted. Roman rule added another layer of pressure. Taxation, military presence, and local political leadership affected daily life, while hopes for justice and restoration remained important themes in Jewish religious thought. The Jerusalem Pilgrimage Road (<https://culturavia.org/jerusalem-pilgrimage-road-reopens-and-the-stones-tell-a-shared-story/>), an excavated street used by people travelling to the Temple, offers tangible insight into this first-century urban and political setting, including the era associated with Pontius Pilate. This context helps explain why questions about authority, community, worship, and redemption carried such significance.

Diverse Jewish Movements and Ideas



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Judaism during this period was not represented by a single viewpoint. Groups such as the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and other Jewish communities differed in their interpretations of Scripture, religious practice, leadership, and the future of Israel. The Dead Sea Scrolls and other surviving sources illustrate this diversity, although scholars continue to debate how particular texts relate to specific groups.

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Christianity begins within this Jewish historical world, not outside it – a point that strengthens informed learning about shared heritage and the later U.S.-Israel relationship.

Jesus and the Jewish World of First-Century Judea

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Jesus lived as a Jew in the first century within the religious, cultural, and political world of Judea and Galilee. The region was shaped by Jewish traditions and scripture while also being under Roman rule. Understanding this setting is essential for explaining Christianity's Jewish roots and the significance of Jesus' teachings.

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Jewish Identity, Scripture, and Community

About

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Jesus participated actively in Jewish life. He attended synagogue, observed the Sabbath and Jewish festivals, taught from the Hebrew Scriptures, and traveled to Jerusalem, where the Temple stood at the center of religious practice. His language, prayers, references, and relationships were grounded in the shared heritage of the Jewish people.

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His teachings addressed how individuals should live out the Torah or Jewish law, with integrity. He spoke of love for God and neighbor, mercy, justice, prayer, repentance, and care for those facing hardship. These themes were part of broader Jewish discussions about faith, justice, and community.

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Interactions with Jewish Teachers and Law

Accounts of Jesus' life describe discussions with Pharisees, scribes, and other Jewish teachers regarding the Sabbath, purity, forgiveness, and faithful conduct. These exchanges reflect interpretation and debate within a living religious tradition, rather than a simple conflict between separate faiths.

Archaeology can deepen this context by linking documented sources and biblical texts with evidence of daily life, worship, trade, and family in places such as Jerusalem, Caesarea, and Masada. Our exploration of history and archaeology in Israel (<https://culturavia.org/a-road-through-history-why-history-and-archeology-matter-in-israel/>) also illustrates how these sites reveal overlapping Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Roman histories. Therefore, Jesus' life is best understood in its Jewish context, while clarifying how Christian beliefs evolved from Jewish scripture, practices, and moral traditions. This perspective supports meaningful engagement with the shared heritage of Jewish and Christian communities.

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The Role of Jewish Scriptures in Christianity

Christianity is deeply rooted in Jewish scripture. The texts that many Christians refer to as the Old Testament are known in Jewish tradition as the Tanakh or Hebrew Bible. While collections and ordering may differ, these writings provide essential historical, theological, and ethical contexts for the New Testament, illustrating the inseparable nature of Christianity and Judaism.

Three Foundational Collections

 The Torah, meaning "instruction," encompasses the first five books of the Bible. It presents creation narratives, the covenant with Abraham, the Exodus, and teachings associated with Moses. For early Christians, these texts elucidated God's relationship with Israel and shaped debates on faith, law, justice, and human responsibility.

The Prophets document calls for faithfulness, warn against injustice, and express hopes for restoration. The Writings include Psalms, Proverbs, Job, and other works that explore worship, wisdom, suffering, and daily life. Collectively, these foundational texts formed the scriptural landscape recognized by Jesus and the first Christian communities.

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Interpretation and Shared Heritage

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Early Christian authors frequently interpreted Jewish scripture to present their understanding of Jesus. Christian doctrine affirms that God has not rejected Israel, as the Jewish covenant remains significant; our discussion of Christianity and the Jewish people (<https://culturavia.org/why-palestinianism-conflicts-with-christian-moral-teaching/>) delves into these implications more thoroughly. These interpretations are integral to Christian theology, while Jewish communities continue to engage with the texts through their own rich traditions and experiences.

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Jerusalem and the Birth of Christianity

About

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Jerusalem holds a central place in Christian history because it is the setting for key events described in the New Testament. The city was not merely a backdrop; it served as a major Jewish religious center and a destination for pilgrimage, worship, and scholarly debate.

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The Gospel accounts outline Jesus' final days in Jerusalem, including his entry into the city, teaching in the Temple, the last supper with his disciples, arrest, crucifixion, and resurrection. These narratives connect the origins of Christianity to Jewish scripture, practices, and expectations while illustrating a movement that developed in new ways.

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The First Christian Community

After Jesus' death, the Book of Acts describes his followers gathering in Jerusalem. At Pentecost, they publicly proclaimed their message, making the city the first significant center of the Christian movement. Early believers shared worship, teaching, meals, and support within their community.

Jerusalem also became a site where early leaders addressed significant questions about identity, practice, and relationships between Jewish and non-Jewish followers. The meeting often referred to as the Jerusalem Council, described in Acts 15, reflects this process of discussion and decision-making. That legacy remains visible in modern Israel, where holy sites continue to foster pilgrimage, cultural exchange, and cooperation across religious communities. This is explored in our overview of Christianity in Israel today (<https://culturavia.org/christianity-in-israel-the-facts/>).

For visitors and learners, Jerusalem offers a way to examine Christianity within its first-century setting and its continuing cultural context. Meaningful engagement begins with recognizing the city's Jewish heritage, diverse ancient communities, and the importance of both faith and historical evidence. This approach supports a fuller understanding of the shared heritage connecting the region's religious traditions.

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The First Christian Communities
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The earliest followers of Jesus, primarily of Jewish descent, inhabited the rich cultural and religious landscape of first-century Judaism. They engaged deeply with the Hebrew Scriptures and observed Jewish traditions, gathering in places such as Jerusalem. Initially, "Christian" described those who followed Jesus as part of a Jewish movement recognizing him as the Messiah.

Jewish Roots and Diverse Communities



CULTURAVIA (<https://culturavia.org>)

These communities exhibited significant variation. Some maintained practices such as circumcision, dietary laws, and synagogue worship, while others developed communal meals, prayer, and support for the needy. Their discussions reflected the diversity of Jewish thought, illustrating interaction rather than an immediate division into separate religions. This historical context helps explain why Christian communities in Israel today (<https://culturavia.org/a-place-where-christianity-thrives-the-untold-story-of-early-christianity>) remain exceptionally diverse, encompassing Arabic-speaking, Aramean, Orthodox, Catholic, Maronite, Armenian, Anglican, and Evangelical traditions within the country's social fabric.

Arts & Culture

The Inclusion of Gentile Followers

Education

As the movement spread beyond Judea, an increasing number of non-Jewish, or Gentile, followers emerged. Leaders debated the necessity of Jewish laws for converts, particularly circumcision and dietary restrictions. The Jerusalem Council, described in Acts, played a crucial role in navigating this dispute, shaping a broader movement while preserving Jewish roots and scriptural connections.

Philanthropy

Over time, many communities became predominantly Gentile, developing distinct institutions and interpretations, while Jewish followers remained integral to the early church's identity. This transition – and Christianity's continuing diversity – fosters a more nuanced understanding of the shared heritage between Judaism and Christianity.

About

From Jewish Movement to Distinct Religion

Blog

Jewish Roots of the Early Christian Movement

Get Involved

(<https://culturavia.org/get-involved/>)

Christianity begins within the diverse Jewish society of the first century. Jesus and his earliest followers were Jewish, drawing upon the Hebrew Scriptures and actively participating in the religious life of the Jerusalem Temple and local synagogues. Their teachings contributed to ongoing conversations about covenant, justice, prayer, and community responsibility.

Initially, followers of Jesus understood themselves as part of Israel's story rather than members of a separate religion. However, they differed in their understandings of how Jesus should be interpreted and what his life signified for the covenant. These discussions unfolded amid broader political and religious transformations, while the shared tradition later influenced concepts of moral responsibility, human worth, and the rule of law above political rulers, as explored in our overview of the Judeo-Christian tradition's influence on Western civilization (<https://culturavia.org/christmas-the-judeo-christian-tradition-and-the-duty-to-defend-western-civilization/>).

Expansion Beyond Israel

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The movement evolved as it spread into both Jewish and non-Jewish communities across the eastern Mediterranean. Leaders such as Paul contended that Gentile converts could join without adopting every practice traditionally associated with Jewish identity, including circumcision and specific dietary regulations. This broadened participation while honoring significant theological and communal discussions.

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Our site has been built with privacy in mind, not the outcome of a singular decision or event. Factors such as the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, evolving community structures, and debates over authority and culture shaped the movement. By the second century, many Christian communities had formed distinct leadership structures, worship styles, and identities, even as Christianity continued to draw upon Jewish scripture and moral heritage.

The Destruction of the Second Temple and Its Consequences



<https://culturavia.org>

A Turning Point in Jewish History

Faith & Heritage
(/faith-heritage)

In 70 CE, Roman forces captured Jerusalem and destroyed the Second Temple during the First Jewish–Roman War. The Temple had been the central place of Jewish worship, pilgrimage, priestly service, and sacrifice, creating a profound religious and communal rupture.

Arts & Culture

(arts-and-cultural-exchange)

Jewish life continued after the Temple's loss. Teachers and communities sustained identity through prayer, study, ethical practice, and observance in local settings, while rabbinic Judaism gradually became the primary framework of Jewish religious life. While some Jewish communities remained in the Holy Land, many others expanded across the Mediterranean and beyond, strengthening a diverse diaspora connected by shared heritage.

Education

(education-and-exchange)

Consequences for Early Christianity

Philanthropy

(philanthropy-and-community)

About

(/about)

The destruction also shaped Christianity, which emerged from the Jewish world of the first century. Many early Christians interpreted the event through beliefs about Jesus, scripture, and sacred worship, while Christianity gradually became more distinct from Judaism through a complex process that unfolded over centuries.

News

(/blog)

Studying 70 CE helps explain why Jerusalem remains a focal point across both Jewish and Christian traditions. Its sacred sites continue to face risks: recent missile strikes sent debris near the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, exposing vulnerabilities to historic spaces and the interreligious harmony they represent. Our account of threats to Jerusalem's holy sites (<https://culturavia.org/iranian-missile-threats-vulnerable-holy-sites-and-hits-church-of-the-holy-sepulchre/>) illustrates why protection and dialogue remain urgent. This history encourages understanding when engaging with communities that remember shared heritage through different theological and historical perspectives.

Get Involved

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Christianity's Historical Presence in the Land

Christianity began in the land of Israel, where Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection shaped the faith's earliest traditions. Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth, the Jordan River, and the Sea of Galilee remain important places for worship, study, and pilgrimage, linking biblical narratives with living communities and cultural memory.

After the New Testament period, Christian communities continued developing across the region. During the Roman and Byzantine eras, churches, monasteries, schools, and pilgrimage routes made Christianity a visible part of public and religious life. Archaeological remains, including churches and mosaics, document this presence. Today, freedom of worship and access to major holy sites remain central to the region's significance, as explored in our overview of Christianity's historic pilgrimage milestone (<https://culturavia.org/preparing-for-a-historic-pilgrimage-israel-invites-the-world-to-christianitys-2000-year-milestone/>).

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Living Communities and Meaningful Engagement

Christianity remains part of the region's social and cultural fabric. Christian Arab families, religious orders, clergy, educators, and institutions contribute to community life in cities and villages across Israel and nearby areas. Visitors can learn through travel, museum exhibits, historic churches, and conversations with local communities.

Understanding this continuity creates opportunities for bridge-building through shared heritage, firsthand experience, and meaningful engagement with the people who sustain these traditions.

Exploring Archaeological Evidence



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Archaeology offers a grounded way to examine the historical setting shared by Judaism and Christianity in Israel. While it cannot prove religious beliefs, it can reveal places, practices, and communities that shaped both traditions.

Material Evidence of Jewish Life

Faith & Heritage
(/faith-heritage)

The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered near Qumran, include biblical manuscripts and Jewish writings from the Second Temple period. Their language and themes illuminate the context in which early Christianity emerged while highlighting the diversity of Jewish thought at the time.

Arts & Culture

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Across Jerusalem and other sites, archaeologists have identified mikva'ot (ritual baths), stone vessels, inscriptions, and Second Temple foundations. A rare Assyrian inscription with Jerusalem's First Temple period corresponds with the biblical account of King Hezekiah's rebellion, supporting the city's status as Judah's capital, as discussed in our analysis of the ancient inscription and the biblical record (<https://culturavia.org/an-ancient-inscription-and-the-biblical-foundation-of-judeo-christian-civilization/>). This evidence helps situate themes of purification, pilgrimage, study, and communal life within a historical context.

Education

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Philanthropy

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Sites Connected to Early Christianity

About
(/about)

Excavations at Magdala and Capernaum reveal first-century Jewish towns in Galilee. Findings of a synagogue, homes, fishing facilities, and ritual baths at Magdala illustrate the environment in which Jesus and his earliest followers lived and taught. At Capernaum, remains include a later synagogue built over earlier foundations, in addition to a site traditionally associated with Peter's home.

News

(/blog)

These findings promote careful comparison rather than false equivalencies. They reveal shared heritage and continuity while preserving the distinct identities of Judaism and Christianity.

Get Involved

(<https://culturavia.org/get-involved/>)

Shared Concepts Between Judaism and Christianity

Judaism and Christianity, while distinct traditions, share significant historical foundations. Christianity developed within the Jewish milieu of the first century, and both faiths draw from the Hebrew Scriptures, referred to as the Old Testament in Christianity. This shared heritage, reflected in ideas of justice, equality, and moral accountability, encourages deeper understanding and meaningful dialogue.

Monotheism and Human Dignity

Both traditions emphasize the belief in one God and connect faith with ethical responsibility. Their teachings affirm human dignity, justice, respect for life, care for the oppressed, integrity, repentance, and obligations toward neighbors. These principles have significantly shaped religious practices and moral frameworks across diverse communities, treating freedom and dignity as divine gifts rather than privileges granted solely by governments.

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The central concept of the Hebrew Bible is the Covenant, which also plays a critical role in Christian theology. In the Hebrew Scriptures, the covenant describes a profound relationship defined by commitments and promises between God and the people. Christians interpret the covenant within their own theological context, while Judaism maintains its unique understanding of God's enduring relationship with the Jewish people.

Covenant and Accountability

Prophetic Traditions and Ethical Action



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Both traditions honor prophetic voices that call communities toward faithfulness and justice. This shared vision informs broader discussions of liberty, human rights, and the historical relationship between Jewish and Christian societies. Readers can consider the Judeo-Christian foundations of justice and freedom (<https://culturavia.org/template/>) alongside scriptural comparisons, historical contexts, and important interpretive differences.

Faith & Heritage

(/faith-heritage)

- **Shared foundation:** belief in one God and a moral order.
- **Shared concern:** responsibility toward neighbors and those in need.
- **Important distinction:** each tradition possesses its own theology, practices, and scriptural interpretations.

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Continuities and Differences

(/education)

(/education-and-exchange)

Shared Roots and Moral Heritage

(/philanthropy)

(/philanthropy-and-community)

Judaism and Christianity share historical roots, sacred texts, and a commitment to ethical responsibility; however, they remain distinct religious traditions. Understanding both requires recognizing shared heritage without interpreting one faith as a version of the other.

About

(/about)

Christianity originated within the Jewish world of the first century. Its scriptures include the Hebrew Bible, referred to by Christians as the Old Testament, while the New Testament focuses on Jesus and the Christian community. Judaism continues to emphasize the Torah, Jewish interpretations, and covenantal life expressed in worship and community.

News

(/blog)

Both traditions value human dignity, compassion, justice, charity, repentance, and accountability before God. This biblical heritage has also influenced public ethics, legal traditions, and cultural identity, as explored in our guide to Judeo-Christian roots (<https://culturavia.org/judeo-christian-roots-the-shared-foundation/>).

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Distinct Beliefs and Practices

Important differences shape belief and practice. Judaism is rooted in the belief in one God and generally does not recognize Jesus as the Messiah or divine. Christianity emphasizes Jesus as Messiah and, in most denominations, understands him as the Son of God and part of the Trinity. Communities also differ in religious law, worship, holidays, conversion processes, and interpretations of salvation. Neither tradition is monolithic; beliefs and customs vary widely among movements and cultures.

Historical Interaction and Respectful Learning

Historical interactions have included scholarship, cultural exchange, and community life, alongside discrimination and persecution against Jews within Christian-majority societies. Engaging with this history calls for accuracy, fairness, and sensitivity, especially when discussing texts or traditions that have been misused to justify prejudice.

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For meaningful engagement, compare primary teachings, listen to diverse Jewish and Christian voices, and avoid assuming that one individual represents an entire faith.

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The phrase "Judeo-Christian" serves as a historical and cultural descriptor for connections between Jewish and Christian traditions, especially their influence on justice, moral responsibility, and communal life. It does not suggest that Judaism and Christianity are identical or that all Jewish and Christian communities share uniform beliefs.

The Meaning of "Judeo-Christian" in Context

Historical and Cultural Context

The term often refers to Jewish Scriptures and Christian thought that have shaped Western art, law, education, and civic ethics. In the United States, it reflects a perceived shared moral heritage. These themes also draw on classical philosophy, religious practice, and diverse communities. Today, that heritage can support a wider alliance advocating for democratic values, religious liberty, truth, and respectful civic life, as explored in our discussion of why Jewish-Christian unity matters today (<https://culturavia.org/faith-freedom-and-israel-why-jewish-christian-unity-matters-more-than-ever/>).

A Term That Requires Precision

However, the term requires context. It is not a synonym for any political agenda or proof of consensus regarding Israel, the United States, or religion. Careful interpretation distinguishes shared heritage from present debates while recognizing diversity within Jewish and Christian perspectives.

For meaningful engagement, readers should ask what a speaker intends, identify the historical sources under discussion, and consider perspectives shaped by varied experiences. Thus, "Judeo-Christian" is best understood as a reference to shared heritage, not a narrow definition.

Addressing Common Questions

Key Historical Events Shaping the Judeo-Christian Roots in Israel

These roots developed through the overlapping Jewish and Christian histories in the land of Israel. Ancient Israelites' covenant traditions and the kingdoms of Israel and Judah shaped the Hebrew Scriptures and enduring ideas about justice, community, and responsibility.

The Second Temple period established central religious institutions. In the first century, Jesus and early Christian communities emerged in Judea and Galilee, connecting Christian teachings to Jewish scripture and practice. Today, Israel's diplomatic engagement with Christian communities (<https://culturavia.org/israels-new-ambassador-to-the-christian-world-reflects-a-changing-relationship/>) reflects how these intertwined histories continue to influence public relationships.

Impact of the Second Temple Period on Early Christianity

The Second Temple period (516 BCE–70 CE) significantly shaped the Jewish world of Jesus and the earliest Christians. Its scriptures, festivals, synagogue life, and debates about messianic hope supplied the religious language Christianity adopted.

Early Christians inherited Jewish teachings and interpreted Jesus through Hebrew Scripture. This shared heritage clarified distinctions while respecting Christianity's Jewish roots and the diversity of Second Temple Judaism.

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Judaism and Christianity share a monotheistic belief in one God, reverence for the Hebrew Scriptures, and ethical teachings centered around justice, compassion, charity, and human dignity. Both traditions value prayer, community, repentance, and accountability.

Their relationship also includes significant differences in theology and practice. Studying these parallels fosters informed dialogue.

Shared Concepts Between Judaism and Christianity

Historical Depth of Judeo-Christian Connections



U.S. CULTURAVIA (https://culturavia.org)

Israel holds a foundational place in the story of both Judaism and Christianity. For Jews, the land is closely connected to the Hebrew Bible, Jewish identity, worship, memory, and communal life. For Christians, Israel is the setting for the life, teachings, death, and resurrection narratives of Jesus, as well as many scriptures Christians recognize as the Old Testament.

Faith & Heritage

(/faith-heritage/)

These ties are both historical and theological. Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth, and the Galilee connect sacred texts to real places that shape prayer, study, pilgrimage, and cultural identity. Religious travel also strengthens understanding between American and Israeli communities by joining biblical faith with living history; our guide to U.S.-Israel pilgrimage and religious exchange (https://culturavia.org/us-israel-pilgrimage-and-religious-exchange/) explores how these visits foster mutual respect, friendship, and interfaith cooperation.

(/arts-and-cultural-exchange/)

Distinct Traditions, Shared Historical Ground

(/education/)

(/education-and-exchange/)

Philanthropy

(/philanthropy-and-community/)

Recognizing this connection does not imply treating Judaism and Christianity as the same faith. Each tradition has its own teachings, practices, communities, and interpretations.

These relationships continue through education, interfaith dialogue, cultural exchange, and firsthand experience of Israel. Meaningful engagement helps students, families, and civic leaders examine history directly, listen to diverse voices, and build mutual trust.

About

(/about/)

- Study the Hebrew Scriptures and Christian Bible in their historical context.
- Visit museums, holy sites, and communities with knowledgeable local guides.
- Approach Jewish and Christian experiences with humility and care.

News

(/blog/)

The enduring connection between Israel, Judaism, and Christianity runs deep. Thoughtful exploration of its history creates a stronger foundation for bridge-building, shared values, and friendship across communities.

Get Involved

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