



**ZeLeM**  
**VEREIN ZUR FÖRDERUNG**  
**DES MESSIANISCHEN GLAUBENS IN ISRAEL E. V.**

*liebe Freunde unseres Volkes Israel!*

## **DIAKRISIS! DIAKRISIS! DIAKRISIS!**

In this time, the gift of Diakrisis, the gift of discerning spirits, is a gift for which we urgently must pray.

This was made very clear to me at the beginning of the Iran war on 02-28-2026. When I first heard about the renewed waves of attacks by the USA and Israel and wanted to inform myself, I immediately began to spin mentally. The first sources I opened almost created the impression that Iran was well on its way to achieving some kind of victory. I paused. It was made clear to me that I had to proceed calmly and analytically and study the matter patiently. This is how the Spirit of the Lord works. Calmly, objectively, analytically and soothingly. He grants us peace and sobriety through His Spirit. The point is, in this matter there is no basis for drawing hasty conclusions. It is a matter of survival to let the Spirit of God teach us the mystery of Israel. I am infinitely grateful to Moshe, my deceased fatherly friend, that I was allowed to learn the mystery of Israel from him, whereby he himself, a Holocaust survivor, never met me as a German with any resentment.

The basis of Diakrisis is, on the one hand, living faith. On the other hand, the basis is knowledge of one's own Bible. This gives rise to the following problem for people who believe in Christ:

Based on the available studies and surveys, a bleak picture emerges:

How many have actually read their Bible completely from beginning to end ("cover to cover")?

The figures vary depending on the study, but research shows:

- USA overall: About 20% of all Americans say they have read the entire Bible

- Evangelical Christians (USA): About 61% claim to have read the whole Bible
- Estimates for Christians in general: Between 25–30% have read the Bible completely

German conditions (according to studies):

- Only about 30% of Germans use the Bible at all at least once a year
- 60% of church members do not read the Bible at all
- Only 3.2% read weekly
- Only 1.6% read daily

The data therefore indicate that significantly fewer than a third of self-identified Christians have actually read the Bible in its entirety. In Germany the figure is presumably even considerably lower than in the USA, where religious practice is generally more pronounced. I can bear witness to this. The ignorance regarding the Word of God is, unfortunately, striking.

It is a remarkable discrepancy: While many regard the Bible as a central moral authority, the majority have never read it completely and therefore have no possibility (through their own fault) of having understood it.

I can recommend the following approach: After getting up, everyone should devote themselves to their quiet time. As soon as I wake up, I begin by asking the Lord into my day. I place myself under the protection of the blood of Jesus and put on the Spiritual Armor, mentioned in Ephesians 6, 10-18.

**<sup>10</sup> Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.**

**<sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.**

***12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.***

***13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.***

***14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;***

***15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;***

***16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.***

***17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:***

***18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;***

When I pray in the morning, I ask the Lord that it may not be too wild a day, since as a lawyer I exercise a profession that takes place in a daily heated spiritual battle. After getting up I read at least one chapter of the Bible and then switch to an audio Bible while I get ready and on the way to work I continue listening. Sometimes I also listen during my lunch break or read again in the evening. The advantage of reading and listening to larger portions of the Bible at a stretch lies in the fact that with each day you internalize larger contexts, which by itself already enables a greater understanding than reading just a single passage a day. However, it should be at least one chapter. So to speak, a survival ration.

The only food that nourishes our soul is the Word of God. It is the “strong meat”.

The soul can be compared to an organism. If I suffer from loss of appetite, this is a serious sign that this organism “soul” is ill.

You do not need to be afraid now. However difficult it may seem to pick up the Bible again, you will quickly notice that appetite – and thus healing – returns when you make a new beginning.

Furthermore: When I sometimes do not feel like reading the Bible, yet overcome my flesh,

then the joy I experience afterwards, when I have allowed myself to be given such a word, is all the greater.

All literature about the Word of God, apart from the Bible, is “sweets.” No organism survives solely on sweets. The soul is nourished nutritiously only by solid food, not by sweets; that is, by reading the Bible.

Does one really think that if one takes a small solid meal once a week in the church service – if at all – and always lets the same passages be explained from the pulpit, that one is then nourishing one’s soul sufficiently? No, at best the soul will wither. Even more likely, because one is unable, due to lack of Bible knowledge, to examine the written word of some supposed Christians, one becomes oneself the deceived and, even worse, a co-deceiver.

If therefore there is no time to read anything else, let God Himself instruct you in His Word through His Word. In case of doubt, only the Bible – in Latin: “In dubio pro sola scriptura!”

In my profession I am allowed to carry the worries of hundreds of people at the same time, and I am currently called, as a representative, to a second workplace as deputy leadership of ZeLeM e.V. This second workplace basically takes place on two levels. On the one level, I rack my brains nonstop as to how we may help Jewish people to find living faith in their Messiah Yeshua. At present, due to the war situation, I cannot fly into the country. A circumstance that occupies thoughts daily.

On the other level, we are called to provide eschatological education. This is a commission within which we must try to “master” the daily news cycle. In this we are called to constant self-education, in order to be able to understand geopolitical developments and place them in biblical context.

In the Spirit of the Lord I am able to orient myself. But this is grace of the Lord alone! And this orientation is based first and foremost on being allowed to believe and on knowing His Bible.

### **A. Definition of Diakrisis:**

We have already pointed out the importance of Diakrisis in lectures and numerous BNI publications. Moshe and Micha did so in their contributions in BNI, and Moshe in hundreds of lectures which can be ordered digitally from us

at any time. Nevertheless, it should be briefly explained what this is about:

Diakrisis is the gift of discerning spirits. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit: A God-given, supernatural ability.

It is a sign of maturity: The ability to distinguish between good and evil, and it grows with our spiritual life.

It is a necessary practice: Every Christian is called to test spirits and doctrines and not to accept and consume everything unquestioningly like a “garbage disposal.” Remember: Just because something is labelled “Christian”, it does not necessarily mean that “Christ” is in it. We must break the habit of naively and unsuspectingly consuming everything that comes along in Christian garb. A defenselessness based on naivety can make us murder victims of the murderer of souls.

Some of the most important Bible passages about Diakrisis are the following:

1 Corinthians 12, 7-11: This is probably the best-known passage in which the gift of discerning spirits is directly mentioned as one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit:

**1 Corinthians 12, 7-11:**

***7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.***

***8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;***

***9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;***

***10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:***

***11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.***

When it says “tongues” it means languages. But this is another topic entirely.

Here discernment of spirits is named in a series with other supernatural gifts of the Spirit. This underlines its importance as a God-given ability for the congregation. However, you need not be afraid that this gift is reserved for only a few.

In this regard we read Hebrews 5:14; this verse does not speak directly of the “gift,” but

it describes the ability to discern as a sign of spiritual maturity:

**Hebrews 5:14**

***14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.***

This verse suggests that the ability to discern can and should be sharpened through spiritual exercise and growth. It is therefore not only a passive gift, but also an active development of one’s own capacity to judge.

We also read 1 John 4:1. This verse is a very practical instruction to all believers not to trust every spirit but to test the spirits:

**1 John 4:1:**

***4 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.***

Here the necessity of discerning spirits is made quite clear. It is a warning and a call to be watchful towards false teachings and influences.

In Heb. 5:14 it says that strong meat is for the mature, whose senses are trained by practice to distinguish good and evil. This does not mean that baby Christians should remain with mother’s milk. This is precisely the way of thinking that has turned the church into a “ruminating animal” for 2,000 years, without being up to date in terms of development. You can also recognize this by its fruits. For example, what was the apostle Paul allowed to set in motion in his comparatively short time of ministry – without telephone, mobile phone, internet, car, airplane, etc. – in comparison to 2,000 years of church history?

**B. The problem of inertia**

In our context we encounter a very profound subject with the strong meat mentioned in the letter to the Hebrews: Namely, the strong meat of eschatology, that is, the doctrine of the last things. It is a matter of understanding the situation of the letter to the Hebrews contrary to the literal wording – that is, of grasping the entire context. From now on, therefore, we also find ourselves in a legal process, namely that

of interpretation according to the wording and according to the context.

Thus the reader already learns here two important methods of legal interpretation, which are very useful for understanding the Bible. And he learns that the mere wording does not necessarily reveal the full meaning of the text, but that the overall context must at least be taken into account. This means, as the name of the method says, that the context of the passage in the chapter, in the book, in the testament and in the entire Bible must be understood. If we tear isolated text passages out of their context, the respective passage can easily be abused. This is how demagogues work. We do not want to be that, but to pass on with a pure heart what we are allowed to understand. By “we” I mean the reader as well as ZeLeM together. When we pass on “our” insight to you, you are directly commissioned to pass on what you have understood, if you encounter ignorance – in love. No one is to be forced. But where the Holy Spirit commissions you to open your mouth, you must do so. Otherwise you make yourself guilty. The reading here does not serve mere infotainment. We are involved in a war with principalities and powers over values of eternity. This concerns both the souls of others and our own souls. That is the seriousness of the situation. Paul often used sporting analogies. In the same way, I would like to encourage you to pass on what you have learned “like a relay baton.” If you encounter rejection in this, that unfortunately belongs to the struggle in which we find ourselves. Spiritual warfare.

To the lone-suffering reader I would like to say in this context: If you are superior on the factual level through the Spirit of the Lord, the adversary has nothing factual to oppose. Then at most insults, lies, slander, etc. can be uttered. At the next stage, it could become dangerous for body and life. The Lord will then decide when our time has come to go. My wish for each one of you is absolute fearlessness.

There are further methods of interpretation that are useful. At this point, however, we will content ourselves with these two.

You see, then, that it is worthwhile to read this magazine. All too often I hear that we report “too much politics,” that this is a “show-off magazine,” and the like. Be assured that everyone who writes a contribution in BNI is,

first and foremost, concerned with passing on, in love, insights that he considers necessary for his brothers and sisters. The print run that we publish costs us several thousand Euros each time. I do not say this to put ourselves in any way on a pedestal, since the work lives from your donations. However, the value of this work is often not recognized. That is a pity, because the words do not originate from our own modest intellectual abilities, but from the Spirit of the Lord. That must not be forgotten.

### **1. The immediate context in the letter to the Hebrews:**

Immediately before the author of Hebrews speaks of “milk” and “strong meat,” he has raised a very deep theological subject: Jesus as High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:10).

Then he pauses and says, so to speak:

***“Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. (Hebrews 5:11).”***

The “hard to be uttered” subject – the doctrine of Melchizedek, which here is to serve us merely as an example – is the “strong meat” that he actually wants to give them. The “milk,” on the other hand, is the “elementary principles of the oracles of God” (Hebrews 5:12) that they should long since have left behind. In chapter 6:1–2 he even lists what belongs to these basics: Repentance, faith, the doctrine of baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.

### **2. It is not about topics, but about the ability to apply:**

This is the crucial point that I have already hinted at. “Strong Meat” is less a particular subject, such as the doctrine of Melchizedek as an example. What concerns me here, as so often, is the vital importance of eschatology. It is about the ability to understand, process and above all apply deeper spiritual truths in life.

Let us look again closely at the verse:

“But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

The focus is not on the “food” (the topic) but on the “trained senses” of the person who eats it. It is about spiritual discernment and moral discrimination.

Drinking milk: A “baby” in the faith takes in the basics: “Jesus died for me, my sins are forgiven, I am a child of God.” That is the vital basis.

Eating “strong meat”: A “mature” person (or adult) has learned not only to consume the message, but to test it. He can listen to a sermon or read a book and, through his “trained senses”, judge. He can judge what he is hearing: Is this really in harmony with God’s character? Does this doctrine lead to more love and holiness or to pride and legalism? He can distinguish “good” from “evil” – not only what is obviously sinful, but also subtle deviations from sound doctrine.

I put an uncomfortable truth before you: Although many believers have believed for decades, they have never moved beyond the mother’s-milk stage. That makes them fair game for the adversary. We are not concerned with publishing a show-off magazine or being know-it-alls, but we want, in love, to put a set of tools in your hands – explanations of what is happening around us.

In this context I tell you that I do not draw any financial advantage from “my” work; I work for ZeLeM free of charge. I am allowed to provide for myself from “my” work as a lawyer. I do not say this to elevate myself, but to deepen the credibility of the person who is permitted to write this article. This is, by the way, how it should be: Whomever is financially independent of donations need not mince words and may proclaim to “his” sheep, independent of donors’ interests, what he has been enabled to recognize for their blessing. Since this should be truthfully done, it will not please everyone, but it is for their good.

The work must be oriented towards the seven letters to the churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 and the standard Jesus there applies to the angels, the pastors, of the congregations. A similar responsibility rests on us who are allowed to convey these articles to you. Here, we are to listen only to the Spirit of the Lord, not to human voices, even if they may mean “well”. We mean well with you and will not allow ourselves to be deterred from passing on “our” gifts of insight to you.

You will know this from your own experience: When you act in the assignment personally entrusted to you, you encounter resistance. Often from the supposedly Christian camp itself.

Christians can become the most cruel instruments of the adversary. This is, again, called spiritual warfare.

You know, I often pray to the Lord that He would explain things to me in such a way that even the dumbest can still understand them. There is absolutely nothing wrong with bringing it to Him in this way. We may always come to the Savior like little children. He is the genius, we are merely His tools and His vessels. Whatever we are allowed to understand, we are allowed to understand only through Him. It is that simple, and we should be aware of it. And He can lift us there and spur us on to peak performances that we ourselves could never have achieved from ourselves. “A person grows with his tasks.”

How does this fit with our examples from Revelation, that is, with eschatology?

A young Christian reads Revelation and takes its “milk”: “Wow, in the end Jesus wins! I don’t need to be afraid.” That is a wonderful and true milk meal. The more mature Christian reads the same chapters and his “trained senses” recognize the “strong meat”: The deeper connections to the Old Testament – for example Daniel and Ezekiel – the warnings against compromise (the letters to the churches, from Revelations), the encouragement to persevere in persecution and the sovereignty of God over world history. He can distinguish which interpretations lead to fear and sensationalism (evil) and which to worship our holy living (good).

Matthew 24: Jesus of course spoke clearly and understandably to all, but the disciples only understood the full scope of His words much later – after His resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. At first it was a shocking prophecy (milk); later it became “strong meat” which helped them to interpret the destruction of Jerusalem and to guide the church through persecution.

I have learned that the purpose of His words is not that I may record some result. Sometimes these words only take effect in the reader much later and I will never find out about it. That is what it is about; sometimes also only fragments remain. But if they help you through the tribulation period under the Antichrist, of which Reve-

lation speaks, then I have achieved my goal and my innermost desire.

### **C. Conclusion on the interpretation of Hebrews 5:14**

Hebrews 5:14 does not define spiritual maturity by the amount of knowledge about complex topics, but by the ability, sharpened through practice, to apply this knowledge wisely and discerningly, in order to distinguish between good and evil in everyday life.

“Strong meat” is every truth of Scripture that challenges us to move beyond the basics and to train our ability for spiritual discernment; in particular, this includes the eschatological writings.

At the beginning of Revelation it says,

#### **Revelation 1:**

**<sup>3</sup> Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.**

This is the ONLY!!! book in the entire Bible that promises a blessing if one reads it, hears it and keeps what is written in it. Whoever is allowed to explain Revelations will find that the solid fundamental beats of the gospel – who Jesus is, who we are in Him – are always delivered along with it. It drives me to despair that such a wide berth is made around this book in Christian circles. Here the vital prophecies for survival in the end times are written down. Nevertheless this vital equipment is not put into the hands of the brothers and sisters in the congregations; instead, the same mother’s milk is constantly administered. This cannot end well. We therefore must face the eschatological writings of the Old and New Testaments.

Moshe has held hundreds of lectures over more than four decades, written hundreds of BNI magazines and had three books published. You can choose various topics from our website on the basis of the bibliography and order them from us. You can order the books and tapes on various topics. I have, at any rate, never found more accurate material for eschatological study and for explaining Scripture.

### **D. Acute current problem: Growing anti-semitism, lack of differentiation**

Over the years Moshe drilled into me again and again that worldwide antisemitism would increase strongly. I can particularly see this in the discussion about the legality of the current war. That hatred of Israel and the Jewish people is increasing in the last days corresponds to the biblical line that Israel will become a “cup of trembling” – it should actually read “poisoned cup” – and a “heavy stone” for the nations.

#### **Zechariah 12:2–3:**

**<sup>2</sup> Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem.**

**<sup>3</sup> And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.**

and that God’s election of Israel remains despite everything:

#### **Romans 11:1–2):**

***I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.***

**<sup>2</sup> God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel saying,**

### **1. Is the Iran war legally legitimate?**

The question therefore arises whether the war currently being waged between the USA, Israel and Iran is legal. It is argued that this war was started by Israel and the USA. For us as Christians it is essential to follow the biblical mandate to seek justice and righteousness..

#### **Micah 6:8:**

**<sup>8</sup> He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?**

and to examine the situation soberly.

**1 Thessalonians 5:21:**

**<sup>21</sup> Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.**

without suppressing the testimony of Scripture about Israel.

For decades the relationship between Israel and the Islamic Republic of Iran has been marked by deep-seated enmity, which increasingly unfolds in a complex web of proxy conflicts. To understand today's escalation and the international law assessment of Israel's conduct of war, one must consider the development of this conflict and the system of Iranian proxies – Hezbollah, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and others. We have been reporting on this for decades, and Moshe has often been able to anticipate developments; I would therefore like to summarize in overview:

Historically, Israel and Iran were not always adversaries. Under the Shah's regime until 1979 there were even relatively close, albeit informal, relations. Both states saw themselves as non-Arab actors in a hostile region, cooperated in the security field and had a shared interest in containing Soviet and Arab-nationalist influence. Only with the Islamic Revolution of 1979 did Tehran undergo a fundamental ideological reorientation: Under Ayatollah Khomeini, Israel became the "Zionist entity" and the symbolic main enemy of the Islamic revolution. Iran positioned itself as the spearhead of a "resistance" against Israel and the USA. The fact that front lines can shift in history is also familiar to us from the Bible – Persia/Iran in particular plays an ambivalent role in Scripture, both as an instrument of judgment and as an instrument of preservation for Israel.

**Ezra 1:1–4:**

**<sup>1</sup> Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,**

**<sup>2</sup> Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.**

**<sup>3</sup> Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem.**

**<sup>4</sup> And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.**

From the ideological reorientation with the beginning of the Mullah regime there gradually developed a strategy of indirect warfare. For a long time Iran refrained from an open, conventional confrontation with Israel and instead focused on building, financing and arming non-state armed actors – so-called proxies. In Lebanon, in the early 1980s and with substantial support from the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, the Shiite militia Hezbollah emerged. Its declared goal is the fight against Israel, the "liberation of Palestine" and the establishment of an Islamist system following the Iranian model. Hezbollah has become the dominant military force in southern Lebanon and has over the years built up an extensive rocket arsenal aimed directly at Israeli territory.

Since then there have repeatedly been attacks by Hezbollah on Israel, particularly through rocket fire and border incidents. A central milestone was the Lebanon War of 2006: after Hezbollah fighters had kidnapped Israeli soldiers and at the same time fired rockets at northern Israel, Israel responded with a massive military operation in Lebanon. From Israel's point of view, this was a classic exercise of the right of self-defense against an armed attack by an organization equipped and controlled by Iran.

Parallel to this Lebanese theater, Iran has established a broader network of proxies in the region. In Syria, Tehran supported the Assad regime and has stationed its own forces and allied Shiite militias, which are in turn part of a strategic "land bridge" extending to Israel's borders. In Iraq, the influence of Iran-aligned militias has grown, some of which openly use anti-Israel rhetoric. In Yemen, Iran supports the Houthi movement, which by now, with rockets and drones, threatens not only Saudi targets but also shipping and – indirectly – Israel.

Everywhere Iran's policy follows the same logic: Israel is to be encircled by a network of armed groups that will act in Tehran's interests in a crisis. For the biblically literate observer it is worth remembering that God calls Israel the "apple of His eye,".

***Zechariah 2:8 (12):***

***<sup>8</sup> For thus saith the Lord of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.***

whoever encircles it is ultimately contending with God's plan of salvation, even if the political motives are ostensibly explained otherwise.

In the Palestinian context, too, Iran has played an important role for years. The Sunni-Islamist Hamas, founded in 1987 and in control of the Gaza Strip since 2007, is not an Iranian "product" in the strict sense. Nevertheless, it has long been financially, logistically and militarily supported by Tehran, as has the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ). Iranian assistance has contributed significantly to Gaza groups being able to manufacture and use rockets in large numbers and to develop tunnel and combat structures explicitly directed against Israel. Although the Syrian civil war situation at times led to tensions between Hamas and Iran, the cornerstone of an anti-Israel cooperation remained. That Israel stands at the center of opposing powers is, in light of Scripture, nothing surprising, since God has included this land in a special way in His plans of salvation.

***Genesis 12: 1-3:***

***Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:***

***<sup>2</sup> And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:***

***<sup>3</sup> And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.***

From Israel's perspective this results in the picture of a long-standing structural scenario of attack: The Iranian state uses non-state actors to continuously threaten Israel with armed attacks without itself officially entering into open

war. This has become particularly clear in recent times through coordinated waves of attack from various directions, for example rocket and drone fire by Hezbollah in the north, by Hamas and PIJ from Gaza, by Iran-linked militias in Syria and Iraq, and by the Houthis in the maritime dimension.

Against this background, the legally delicate question arises as to "who started the war." Under international law, the starting point is the prohibition of the use of force anchored in Article 2(4) of the UN Charter and the right of self-defense against an armed attack in Article 51. Unilateral attacks – whether by states or by non-state actors attributable to them – generally violate the ban on the use of force. Since the 1980s it has been above all actors from the Iranian sphere of influence – particularly Hezbollah and other militias – who have systematically used rockets and other weapons against Israel. These ongoing attacks have, from Israel's viewpoint, the character of a continuing armed conflict, at times "smoldering," at times openly breaking out. That the Bible knows different times – "a time for war and a time for peace,":

***Ecclesiastes 3:8:***

***<sup>8</sup> A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace. – does not relieve us of the duty to measure every use of force by God's standards.***

Legally, representatives of the view that Israel's conduct of war today is lawful argue essentially as follows: First, they refer to the fact that an armed attack in the sense of Article 51 UN Charter does not necessarily have to come from a formally acting state. The International Court of Justice and state practice recognize that large-scale attacks by organized non-state groups can constitute an armed attack if they are attributable to a state or at least substantially directed, supported or organized by another state. In the case of Hezbollah and other proxies, reference is made to the close operational, financial and logistical connection with Iran, which gives the attacks a state-orchestrated character.

Second, it is argued that the multitude of rocket attacks, assaults and border operations carried out over the years by the Iranian proxy network against Israel are to be qualified as a series of armed attacks to which Israel may

respond with self-defense measures. Self-defense is not limited to a one-off reaction immediately after the first shot but can, as long as the armed attack continues or manifests itself in a concrete, recurring threat, also be carried out in the form of ongoing military measures, provided these remain necessary and proportionate. The continued presence and armament of Iranian proxies directly on Israel's borders and the ongoing attacks are interpreted in this argument as an expression of a "permanent state of attack."

Third, proponents of the legality of Israel's conduct of war rely on the concept of so-called extended or "intertemporal" self-defense. According to this, a state should not be forced to wait until massive damage has already occurred before warding off a threat. In view of modern weapons systems – highly mobile rockets, drones, precision-guided missiles – and the geographic narrowness of Israel, it is argued that it is permissible under international law to act even against structures that are clearly used for recurring or imminent attacks. When – so the argument goes – a multitude of attacks by proxies has taken place and further attacks are foreseeable, Israel may combat the military infrastructure of these groups even on foreign territory (such as Lebanon or Syria) in order to break the continuity of the attacks. Here too, from a biblical perspective, we must remember that every "preventive" measure must face the question of whether it truly serves the prevention of injustice or itself turns into injustice; God's Word expressly calls on us to "seek justice,"

***Isaiah 1:17:***

***17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.***

The result, from this viewpoint, is the following picture: It is not Israel that has "started the war," but Iran with its long-term policy of indirect but permanent military confrontation through proxies, which has repeatedly led to armed attacks on Israeli territory. Israel thus finds itself in a situation of ongoing self-defense against a complex, decentralized, yet strategically coordinated attack emanating from Tehran. As long as this state of attack persists and Israel limits its military measures to targets

that are militarily legitimate and observes the principles of necessity and proportionality, the continuation of the warfare is to be understood as an exercise of the right of self-defense guaranteed in the UN Charter.

This line of argumentation is not undisputed under international law; particularly concerning the question of which form of prevention still qualifies as self-defense and at what point the use of force turns into an unlawful war of aggression, there are considerable differences of opinion. Nevertheless, the discussion shows on what legal basis proponents classify the continuation of Israel's warfare against Iranian proxies and – indirectly – against Iran as justified under international law.

In the international-law debate on the legality of Israel's conduct, it must first be emphasized that criticism of Israel – even sharp criticism – is not per se antisemitic. According to established definitions, such as the IHRA working definition, a discussion of specific military measures, of the interpretation of Article 51 UN Charter or of the proportionality of individual operations is legitimate as long as it is based on the same standards that apply to other states. It becomes problematic where criticism is no longer based on legal arguments and verifiable facts, but slips into classic antisemitic patterns. In parts of the debate about whether Israel's conduct of war violates international law, such patterns can indeed be observed. These include, for example, formulations in which Israel is described as fundamentally "evil," "demonic" or as "the greatest criminal state in history," while comparable or more serious violations by other actors are completely ignored. Equally typical are equations of Israel with National Socialism ("Israel is the real Nazi state," "what the Jews are doing today is worse than the Shoah") or the claim that Israel has "no right to exist" and must be abolished as a state. Such statements have nothing to do with a legal evaluation of the use of military force; they are instead the adoption of classic antisemitic stereotypes into the international-law debate. In addition, some contributions feature conspiracy narratives in which "the Jews" or "Israel and its lobby" are constructed as an all-powerful force that supposedly "controls" international institutions, media or governments and therefore may "with impunity" break international law. Here, too, the discussion is no longer about concrete legal

norms and their application but about a stereotypical image of a Jewish world conspiracy, well known from the history of antisemitism. Also characteristic is the double standard: While in the case of other states complex security situations, threat scenarios and the right of self-defense are discussed in detail, in the case of Israel every reference to threats from rockets, terrorist attacks or regional proxies is often dismissed as mere “propaganda,” and the state is effectively denied any right to self-defense. Wherever criticism of Israel slips into these patterns – demonization, denial of the right to exist, conspiracy narratives and openly Jew hostile attributions – it leaves the ground of serious legal debate and takes on antisemitic traits, which must be identified as such and rejected.

Against this background, it would be an oversimplification under international law to label the current conflict simply as an “illegal war” by Israel. The decisive norm is the prohibition on the use of force enshrined in Article 2(4) of the UN Charter, flanked by the right of self-defence in Article 51. On this basis, as has been shown, one can indeed put forward a robust argument that Israel is not acting as an aggressor, but is responding to a series of ongoing armed attacks carried out by an Iran-orchestrated proxy system. When large-scale rocket, drone and terrorist attacks emanate from structurally organised groups that are to a significant extent supported by a state in terms of personnel, logistics and finances, there are strong reasons to attribute these attacks, at least functionally, to the supporting state and to grant Israel a continuing right of self-defence.

In addition, international law does not impose an obligation of passivity when a state has for years been exposed to a cumulative threat that manifests itself in recurring physical attacks. While the right of self-defence does require necessity and proportionality of the response, it does not preclude Israel from attacking the military infrastructure of those actors from whom these attacks objectively originate – even if they are located outside its own territory. As long as the operations are recognisably aimed at repelling and preventing further armed attacks and not at an expansive conduct of war “for its own sake”, Israel’s use of force can thus be placed within the framework of Article 51 of the UN Charter.

The opposing view, which summarily characterises Israel’s actions as a war of aggression in violation of international law, often disregards this complex factual background and ignores the evolved state practice in dealing with non-state attackers and their state sponsors. In light of the doctrinal approaches outlined and Israel’s specific threat situation, it is in any case legally untenable to simply brand the conflict as “illegal”. Rather, it is a highly controversial borderline area from a legal perspective, in which there are sound and coherent arguments for the compatibility of Israel’s conduct with the international law regime on self-defence – and in which any serious discussion must take due account of these arguments instead of negating them ideologically.

## **E. Conclusion:**

In result, it can therefore be maintained that the current war – for all the legal controversy – cannot simply be dismissed as an “illegal war of aggression” by Israel. By invoking the right of self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter and in view of the ongoing attacks and threats posed by Iranian proxies ( Hamas, PIJ, Hezbollah and others), there are weighty lines of argument that make Israel’s conduct appear to be covered by international law. As long as Israel’s operations are recognisably aimed at repelling and preventing further armed attacks and remain within the bounds of necessity and proportionality, it is well arguable that what is taking place is the exercise of an existing right of self-defence – and not a “voluntary” war of aggression.

From an Israeli perspective in particular, however, there are many reasons why this war should nevertheless come to an end. For years, Israel has increasingly relied on the strength of its own arm, on military superiority, intelligence operations and technological supremacy. Whether a war which, in this constellation – indirectly also favoured by a “protector” such as Donald Trump and the erosion of the Iran deal triggered by him – can in fact be said to stand under divine blessing is at least theologically and morally doubtful. The full consequences of the war now being waged cannot yet be foreseen. A regime change in Tehran appears unlikely in realistic politics terms: The key positions in the Iranian power apparatus and

military are filled in such a way that successors are practically in place everywhere; the structures are geared toward continuity. A physical invasion of Iran with the aim of regime change could, in light of the experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq – both smaller, militarily weaker, and yet disastrous projects for the intervening powers – only be assessed negatively. Iran is geographically larger, better protected by mountain ranges, and has a military leadership that is tyrannical and tactically skilled domestically and cannot be controlled from outside or deployed as a power factor “at will”.

Added to this is the strategic and domestic political dimension in the United States. The nuclear agreement (JCPOA) negotiated by the Obama administration, which provided for – albeit time-limited – control and limitation of Iran’s nuclear programme, was unilaterally terminated by Donald Trump; since then, inspections have been massively curtailed and uranium enrichment has, by all accounts, progressed significantly. At the same time, the US public is so exhausted by polarisation, conspiracy theories and permanent scandalisation that support for a long-term, costly conflict with Iran is foreseeably likely to erode. Under Trump or a similarly oriented successor, the United States would presumably have no option other than to end this war – if it continues to escalate – in some relatively weak form, that is, without a clear, long-term political order perspective. Precisely for this reason it is important to state soberly: From the perspective of international law, it can be argued with good justification that Israel’s military action is currently covered by the right of self-defence; at the same time, the strategic, political and moral situation argues in favour of bringing this war to a political end as soon as possible – before it finally escapes control and

leads to an escalation of scarcely manageable proportions.

In this context, one is drawn to look at the Gog of Magog prophecy in Ezekiel 38. There a scenario is described in which a northern power bloc – identified with Russia – is drawn into a major end-time conflict in and against Israel. If one transfers this motif to the current situation, a dangerous constellation appears conceivable: Should the war between Israel and the Iran-directed network continue to escalate while, at the same time, the United States reduces its direct military presence or withdraws from the confrontation altogether due to domestic political pressure, a security vacuum would arise into which other major powers – in particular Russia, in conjunction with Persia – could be drawn in. In such a constellation, the image sketched in

***Ezekiel 38:8:***

***<sup>8</sup> After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them.***

would no longer be merely distant biblical symbolism, but at least a politically conceivable scenario. In light of the current spiral of conflict, the prophecy serves as a warning of how quickly a supposedly regionally limited war can turn into a confrontation of global dimensions.

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