THE NEW SHOFAR

Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act.
Dietrich Bonhoffer

October 11, 2026

Only God's steadfast love endures forever

It would seem to be morally repugnant to ponder our readings this week without considering the horrific slaughter of Jewish men, women and children in Israel on October 7th, 2023. This remembering of that day is aimed at encouraging a moral reflection by all Christians living in a world where moral norms have been savaged and ignored. Watching the streets fill with keffiyeh wearing Palestinian supporters always fills me with sadness as these events have spawned an epidemic of gross antisemitism which shames all of us. As Christians, we have a moral imperative, not to support Israel's political endeavours, but to speak out against Evil and promote the victory of good over that which would subvert the intentions of God as set out in the Scriptures.

The Evil in question is beyond debate. On 7 October, Hamas and its accomplices carried out a cross-border invasion, ambush, and slaughter, maliciously directed at civilian life. These murders were qualitatively different to lives lost during a battlefield exchange or to collateral damage during a military operation. The victims were men, women, children, the elderly and disabled, foreign workers, festivalgoers, and whole communities who were executed without discrimination or mercy. They were the specific targets. Sexual violence was not incidental to the massacre; it was part of the premeditated method of terror, cruelty, and humiliation. Homes were invaded, families were shattered, bodies were defiled, and the ordinary trust of civilian life was destroyed. They were raped and murdered where they slept, danced, and sought refuge. No previous wrongdoing or perceived wrongdoing by Israel can ever warrant such a Satanic action.

Commemoration Versus virtue signalling

There is not a great deal of difference between October 7th 2023 and the setting for our reading from **Isaiah 25**. The previous chapter of Isaiah presents an otherworldly picture of suffering, death and calamity, anguish poured out upon the earth and its inhabitants because of their sins. It is presented as a suffering that is inevitable when people turn their backs against YAHWEH or reject his Almighty rule.

This is why Moab is condemned… *The Moabites shall be trodden down in their place as straw is trodden down in a dung-pit*. It is not necessarily that specific people. They stand as representative of all those whose ways do evil, whose passions are not for faithfulness to the Divine Will but rather for the ethereal and non-satisfying attractions of this life and its false promises. **Chapter 25** is filled with magnificent promises of a spectacular banquet hosted by God himself, as a feast to be understood as God's enduring love for his people, a love looking beyond their sins and rebellion to a time when they will repent and return. Every act of Evil is followed by an act of God's loving and compassionate grace ensuring that Evil, for all its horrors, is never the final word.

We cannot ignore the reality that people do evil deeds, actions often spawned by a hatred camouflaged by religious sentiment and the pretence that it is "what God wants". In the Bible, we see this acted out by the Egyptians, the Assyrians, Babylonians and

many more, ending up with the Roman occupiers. Biblically speaking, these are representative of the reality that there will always be opposition to God's will for all peoples.

It is the man who did not put on the appropriate clothing for the feast in today's Gospel. On the surface it might appear to be a minor failing, but it is disobedience, a failure to heed and respect the will of the Host. It is pure self-centred arrogance on the part of one to whom a magnificent gift had been offered but not earned. This is the very image of living in the Kingdom of God, living in the reign of Jesus Christ, a reign including the crushing of Evil.

Babylonians, Assyrians, Amalekites and Hamas are for always

Hamad Al-Regeb, a Hamas official, prayed for "*annihilation*" and "*paralysis*" of the Jews whom he described as filthy animals: *"[Allah] transformed them into filthy, ugly animals like apes and pigs because of the injustice and evil they had brought about."* His is not the only voice sprouting evil. **Fathi Hammad** and leader of Hams warned… *There are seven million Palestinians abroad, enough of your warming up. You have Jews everywhere. We must attack every Jew on the planet – slaughter and kill, Allah willing.* This is the same kind of evil spelled out for us in **Isaiah ch.24**, an evil that can only be overcome by a gracious God who pours out his love in a repentant and humble people…*God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble* (**1 Peter 5:5**).

In the end it is all about YAHWEH our God and our willingness to surrender

But there is a better way. Alongside Judaism, Christians are people abiding in the hope and the faith by which we have lived for all these thousands of years. With every disaster, we are encouraged to focus on what urgently needs to be done today to repair and heal what has been broken. But that healing will only come when the Evil among us is named. It is for this reason in every tragedy we see the opportunity for a yet more joyous future. In Hebrew this is found in the joy of **Yizkor –** which means "Remember." In grieving, the faithful implore God to *remember* the souls of our relatives and friends who have died and to renew and strengthen the connection between us and our loved one. In the face of diabolical actions aimed at hurting others, God calls upon all of us to Remember biblically. That memory is summed up in the **Shema Israel…** *Hear, Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One (***Deut 6:4-9***)*. Whatever else we do in the face of the Evil of October 7th, and the mindless perpetuation of honouring those who prefer annihilation to reconciliation, death to life, we should not marginalise the role God has to play. Not Allah the God of Hamas and its deluded followers, but Yahweh the God if Israel, the Father of our Saviour and Messiah, Jesus Christ. Repent. Believe. This is the only way to enduring Peace.

On Wednesday the modern *Moabites* will undoubtedly hit the streets but all they propose is a return to **Isaiah 24**. Only in **Hope** is it possible to keep our minds and hearts on the promises of **Isaiah 25** and the Gospel feast of Matthew. There have always been those who refuse to accept God's invitation to a better way, and their eventual fate is spelled out in a clear and brutal fashion in the Gospel…*Then the king said to the attendants, Bind him hand and foot and throw him into the darkness outside…*