



Amir Tsarfati
Anchor Podcast: Chris Mitchell

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7zvyqr8EiAI>



AMIR: Hey, Shalom everyone, I'm Amir Tsarfati from CONNECT here in Galilee for another episode of *The Anchor Podcast*. And today we have a very special guest, Chris Mitchell. Shalom, Chris.

CHRIS: Shalom, Amir.

AMIR: Good to see you, Chris.

CHRIS: Good to see you too.

AMIR: You are the head of the news bureau of CBN in Israel, CBN, Christian Broadcast Network.

Am I right?

CHRIS: You're correct.

AMIR: And you've been the longest correspondent of CBN here in the land of Israel for 25 years, no?

CHRIS: Yeah, we came on August 17, 2000. My wife Elizabeth, my two children, Kathleen and Grace, my son came two weeks later, but August 2000 was when we arrived.

AMIR: And I think that I've gotten to know you from the very beginning as I was leading tours in Israel.

CHRIS: Yeah.

AMIR: And you would join some of them as a correspondent. You would cover some pilgrimages to the land, and some large groups with big names of pastors and ministry leaders. We got to know each other. And along the course of the years, I've learned to see that you're one of those that you really haven't changed. You stay the same humble person that I've known from the very beginning.

And it's very hard not to change when you're in the media world and as you get bigger and more and more famous. So, thank you for staying...

CHRIS: Well, thank you. I'm just trying to be myself. [Laughter]

AMIR: Yes. Let's go back to how it all began with your "affair" with Israel.

CHRIS: Sure.

AMIR: Because you're not Jewish, are you?

CHRIS: No.

AMIR: And yet for the last 25 years, you've been living in Jerusalem of all places.

CHRIS: Sure.

AMIR: What led you to Israel?



CHRIS: Well, I first came in 1996 on an assignment with CBN. And when I look back on that trip, it was sort of my introduction to Israel. And when I was traveling to the land on assignment with covering stories, I felt like the Lord was this proud landowner, and He was showing me His land. That's how I felt. And it was such a ... I fell in love with the land. I fell in love with the people. I fell in love with the city of Jerusalem. My one regret was that my wife and three children weren't with me because you can show pictures, show videos, you can tell stories, but it's not like actually being here. It makes a difference. The next year in 1997, I was here on a second assignment with CBN, and I went to a message from Derek Prince.

AMIR: Yes.

CHRIS: The late, great Bible teacher from Great Britain. And he was getting out of the British army in 1948, and he was telling an elderly Jewish woman that he wanted to live in Jerusalem. And the woman said to him, "Derek, you don't choose Jerusalem. Jerusalem chooses you." And

literally when he said that it pierced my heart. And I thought, “Lord, are you choosing us for Jerusalem?” The next year in 1998, I came again on the third assignment with CBN. Just before I came, my boss put out an email asking for volunteers to come and start a bureau in Jerusalem. And I literally, Amir, pulled away from the computer thinking, “Lord, is this our assignment which You’ve called us to do?”

So, I came, and I would call, sort of a picture in my mind, when I came for that third visit. And I was in Tel Aviv, and it was with Michael Little, you know, the former president; you know him well. And he went to a meeting. I went for a swim in Tel Aviv. Interesting because the first time I think I’d ever stayed overnight in Tel Aviv. And when I came back, I went to the balcony, and I just had a picture in my mind, and I felt like God was bringing together ministries and individuals to Israel, to Jerusalem, and I felt like I saw this big key in the sky. And the individuals’ ministries were on one side, and the Lord was on the other. And it was like this key was unlocking the return of the Lord. And like this was His plan to bring. And I felt like CBN was part of that and hopefully I could be part of that too. But that was one more sign, as it were, that He wanted us to come here. So 1999, we thought we were going to come because of budget reasons, we didn’t. But then in May of 2000, Michael Little again came up to me on the third floor, which is the studio headquarters building of CBN and he said, “Get ready to go.” That was May. We were here in August.

And I would say while this was going on, my wife, too, had her own experience that she felt called. She was 12 years old—she remembers this—and she was asking her mother about the return of Jesus. And she said, “Well, read it in your Bible. That’s in Matthew chapter 24.” And she got her little white Bible with a zipper on it and said she was in the front steps. And she opened it and she said, “The Lord said, ‘That’s when I called you to Israel.’” And you have to know this

when you're here and what we came... we came in August. You know the Second Intifada began five weeks later, September 28, which began like a four-year period of suicide bombings, terror attacks. And...

AMIR: ...There're reasons not to stay.

CHRIS: Exactly! You know, but when we look back, Liz and I never had a conversation like, "Is it too dangerous? Do we belong? Should we go back?" We never had that conversation because we both felt called. And it's one thing to be called for yourself, or your spouse. But when you have three children that are riding buses or throughout a place where you never know if a bus will blow up, that was another thing.

And going back just a few years, in 1998, when I was here, I also had this sense of—I felt like the Lord wanted me to put Philip, Kathleen, and Grace on the altar in a spiritual sense like Abraham did with Isaac on a literal sense. And it was so hard to do that. But when I finally prayed through with the help of the Holy Spirit, I felt like He had such a fierce love for them. So when literally the buses were blowing up, and there were suicide bombings throughout Israel, and especially Jerusalem near home, school, and work, we felt like that was an anchor to our soul that He would take care of them as well as taking care of us. So then we came here and we went through the Intifada and we're here been 25 years.

AMIR: Amazing. And it seems like we're now at the end of a two-year-long war, the longest war in Israel's history, by the way. And you have covered so many things in the Middle East and in Israel. And do you think that this war was different than anything else you've covered before?

CHRIS: Yeah, very much.

AMIR: In what sense?

CHRIS: Because it changed the whole dynamic of the whole region. There were so many things. I mean, you could look at the Second Intifada, 2005 disengagement, the 2006 Second Lebanon War and then the wars between Hamas, 2008, 2009, 2012, 2014, 2021 as almost a prelude to everything that happened on October 7th, and even the rise of ISIS throughout the region. But on October 7th, it was a watershed that changed Israel. It changed...

AMIR: ...Where were you on October 7th?

CHRIS: Oh, I was in Jerusalem. I was actually... you know, I had gotten up early and for some reason I had just laid down on my couch in my office and had gone back to sleep. Liz walks in and said, “Chris, do you hear what’s going on?” So I woke up and obviously there were two things. There were iron dome interceptions, and there were sirens. So that’s when I realized October 7th, and we knew almost instinctively how much, how serious it was and how different it was because we started hearing death tolls of, “There’s a hundred that were killed, 200, 500, 700.” And it was like this was a magnitude more than anything we’d ever experienced. So right now, that day we did three YouTube lives. We did two the next day and we’ve been reporting on it like you have since then. But it really changed; it was a wakeup call—I mean, that’s an understatement—to Israel of what its enemies wanted to do. It wasn’t, and these people were the farthest left you could almost get in Israeli society. They helped these people. They took them to the hospital. They employed them.

AMIR: The most pro-Palestinian Israelis were attacked that day.

CHRIS: Yes, exactly.

AMIR: Which tells you the whole story of it doesn’t matter as long as you’re a Jew and Israeli, you are the enemy. Period.

CHRIS: Exactly.

AMIR: Now you covered, okay, so obviously you realized something is different but throughout the last two years, you had your boots on the ground in Gaza and around Gaza unlike others that are covering this conflict from around the world, and are coming up with some stories and fake narrative, you saw things with your very eyes. Tell us more about that.

CHRIS: Well, I think the first thing is that since we had covered all these wars from Hamas or back in the Second Intifada with the Palestinian Authority or Fatah, you gain a perspective of trusting certain sources. For example, right after the October 7th, Hamas began publishing death tolls. And immediately we know “This doesn’t sound right. It doesn’t feel right. It’s not right.” It’s, they were lies from the quote unquote “Hamas Ministry of Health.” And yet much of the media just ran with it. But I think thankfully we had the perspective and the experience to say, “No, this is not right. This is...” And then to hear the stories of genocide and then to know what Israel has done in the past, and what they did during this war, where they text people, they call people, they drop leaflets. They do all sorts of things to tell the enemy where they’re going.

AMIR: No other country ever did and is ever doing in any battle.

CHRIS: No. And that comes from, say, high level US generals to say that, or John Spencer, who’s actually considered like many of the world class war historians

AMIR: Or Richard Kemp.

CHRIS: Yeah, exactly. Exactly, so they understand war and they understand that’s not the way you really fight a war. But if you want to protect civilians, that’s exactly what you do. And they had to fight not only an urban warfare, which is the hardest kind of warfare, but they had to fight a subterranean warfare. We got to go into one of those tunnels where General Goldfuss, who was the commander, I think of the 98th Division at that time, and he told us they were learning, learning how to fight above and below the ground at the same time. And it was a learning curve for the IDF,

but they have really mastered it during this time. And yet the world accuses them of genocide and starvation. And that was another myth that the Hamas uses as its psychological warfare, which unfortunately, they were winning and have won that battle front in many ways.

AMIR: Information battle that, by the way, Charlie Kirk was concerned that Israel is losing, [said] in his letter to the prime minister. And this is where I'm asking you: do you see Israel losing the information battle?

CHRIS: Yeah, I think they are. I think they are, unfortunately. I think sometimes when an incident happens, and I think one of the biggest ones was at the very beginning of the...

AMIR: ...With the hospital.

CHRIS: With the hospital. There was an accusation that Israel struck a hospital, 500 people were killed, but it wasn't until hours later that it realized it was an Islamic Jihad rocket that misfired, went into a parking lot and killed maybe 50 people. But by the time that information came out, as you said earlier, truth gets its sandals on before the lie gets around the world. And so, I think Israel does what is very professional, they investigate; they find out exactly...

AMIR: ...But they don't have a rapid response team.

CHRIS: No.

AMIR: That's the problem.

CHRIS: Yes, yes, which they need. Because when they do come out, it's verifiable. You can conclude that they've done their homework because they know the battlefield, and yet rapid response is really what they need because that's the way the news cycles are right now.

AMIR: You would think that after so many cycles of violence with Hamas, we would already know their tactics and how to battle it. But it seems like the enemy always surprises us when it comes to propaganda and lies, and we just don't seem to catch up with them when it comes to that.

CHRIS: Yeah, yeah. In fact, we interviewed Gil Huffman, who was with honestreporting.com, and I know they took out master propagandists...

AMIR: Yeah, Abu Ubaidah.

CHRIS: Yeah. And they have teams in the field with real time—with GoPro's—and they're continually sending back information and video to try to win that war in real time.

AMIR: Because he realized the importance of propaganda during war. And it seems like October 7th took place and hours later, hours, not even days, rallies all across the world against Israel and accusing us for genocide that hasn't even "started" in a way. But we're already accused, being accused for that.

As a believer, does it change the way you cover news? Because obviously there is a spiritual component here that non-believers, I believe, cannot see. But what do you see yourself as a Christian, born-again Christian, that is part of the media?

CHRIS: Well, first of all, because being a believer, you see things through a biblical lens. You see the Bible as a source of what is actually happening in the world today. You see Israel as a miracle that has been reborn in the last 150 years or so. Mark Twain in the late 1800s called this land desolate. And now it's a fruitful place, a world power. You can't explain that, that the Jewish people that had been scattered for 2,000 years came back with their same faith, with their same language.

AMIR: Because you can't explain it, people come up with stories as if they're not the real Jews and it's not their real land because they cannot explain it.

CHRIS: Yes, exactly.

AMIR: That's exactly the point! They cannot explain it. Only if you truly believe in the Bible, then you can explain it.

CHRIS: Exactly, yeah.

AMIR: And so you come from a perspective that is different from many other media sources because you bring faith into that. Obviously, that makes you automatically more pro-Israel in a sense. Are you being accused of that, of being not exactly an objective source of news and all of that?

CHRIS: Not that I'm aware of. We haven't had a lot of accusations necessary to that effect.

AMIR: What is the importance of Christians covering news? Because news is news. Media is media. Everybody says, "Christians should teach the Bible and evangelize." Why should Christians even be in the media and the news?

CHRIS: One of the Scriptures I think the CBN News looks on is a verse in the Bible about the sons of Issachar. One of the tribes of Israel that understood the times they knew what Israel should do. (1 Chronicles 12:32) And I think it's incumbent on Christians all over because the news is life. We live in a real world and people need to understand that. But how do they interpret the times? And I think the Bible is that guidebook that helps us understand where we are. And you did that so well whether it's *Exploring Ezekiel* or *Discovering Daniel*, we see that especially these days. And I think it's through the Bible and also prayer. I mean, we pray every day to get the day started to help the Lord help us to: What stories are we going to report on? Who are we going to interview? How do we look at this particular story? I think that informs what we do, the stories we choose, and the way we report.

AMIR: Now you've been here for 25 years. Have you seen any change in the way Israelis look at you in the last 25 years?

CHRIS: Yes, very much so. I think when we came here in 2000 and then the Intifada began five weeks later, the evangelical Christians seemed to be the ones that kept coming during that really

dark period in Israel's history. And I think that was to me the beginning of a change, a softening of the heart of Israelis and Jewish people looking at Christians that they weren't just out to—Well, this is a 2,000-year history. So, they began to soften the heart. And I think especially in these last two years that the way we have been able to report on events has really like—I'll tell you, some Jewish people come up to us and they say, "Thank you. Thank you for the way you're reporting." To me, that is so heartening that they see what we do, telling the truth about Israel, and from a biblical perspective, from an Israeli perspective to see what Israel is doing to try to prosecute a war, trying to survive. Israel is trying to survive this seven front war and the information war, which is the eighth front. So, I think it's been a marked change for evangelical Christians and the relationship with the Jewish people.

AMIR: What about the internal division in Israel? You've been witnessing it.

CHRIS: Sure.

AMIR: How did that affect you? How did you see it?

CHRIS: Well, it's unfortunate, I think, in terms of one thing; well, before October 7th, there was judicial reform. I mean, if you look at it on face value, it seems like a legitimate concern that the Supreme Court here in Israel has become more like an oligarchy, and just trying to enforce and undermine the will of the people through the Knesset. I think from a legal perspective, as we have examined it and reported on it, that seems like a legitimate concern. However, there was such division. Unfortunately, it seems after October 7th, after a while, the hostage situation became politicized and it became not just, "Let's get the hostages out now," but "Let's get rid of the government."

AMIR: Let's topple the government.

CHRIS: Yeah.

AMIR: Let's get rid of the hostages as a means to topple the government.

CHRIS: Exactly. Now, that's not all, but that certainly was part of, it seems, what was going on in Hostage Square for the last couple of years.

AMIR: Yeah, to be honest with you, that's why I personally felt uncomfortable going to the Hostage Square because I felt like it was taken hostage by the same elements who are anti-government to begin with, regardless of the war. And so, do you think that division contributed to the beginning of the war or to the war itself?

CHRIS: Well, I think that was clear because Yahya Sinwar, he said in his own documents that they said, "This division is something that we can exploit." And unfortunately, after October 7th, there were even more documents that said, "Well, we can maximize the division within Israel society by using the videos of the hostages and they're becoming incessant demand." Now, everybody wants the hostages back. Everybody wanted all the hostages back. It was a question of who do we blame? Do we blame the government or do we blame Hamas?

AMIR: Yes. And unfortunately, some of the far-left people in Israel, very, very obsessed with the government, I think they viewed the government as worse than Hamas and that's how blind they are to see all of this. Let's talk about the spiritual state of Israel. Do you see a change as a result of this war between the Israel before the war and the Israel after the war, spiritually?

CHRIS: Yeah, I do.

AMIR: What do you see?

CHRIS: Well, I think the—Now, I know there was a poll not long after the war where I think a majority of Israelis felt closer to God because of this. Now, certainly this—many people have different reactions. But I think actually the testimonies of some of the hostages coming out of the tunnels that it was the observing the Sabbath, reading the Psalms. And actually, I believe one of

them said actually the juice kept—didn't run dry. So yeah, I think those testimonies have, I think, softened and maybe drawn many Israelis back to the Jewish faith. And I don't know of many sayings, well, "I've come to know Yeshua as my Messiah." But I believe that there's a softening of the Jewish people. And that seems like Ezekiel 36.

AMIR: Absolutely.

CHRIS: He's bringing them back and He's going to give the—take away the heart of flesh and give them a heart of stone. I'm sorry. The other way around, ...

AMIR: Yeah.

CHRIS: ...take a heart of stone and give them the...

AMIR: Yes. I always say in order to believe in the Son of God, you first need to believe that there is a God.

CHRIS: Yeah.

AMIR: And I think that's where we—Because Israel have gone insanely secular over the last 30, 40 years to the point that we trusted our army more than we trusted God. And October 7th came, and we realized that that which we put our trust in is that which failed miserably and brought us to the brinks of another Holocaust. And I think that that caused so many people to understand that our presence here is miraculous. Nothing less than, nothing short than miraculous because we're not as good as we thought we are. Our military, our intelligence, with all the respect, failed miserably. And we're still here. The plot of Iran, if it would have been materialized, would have completely destroyed us. The plot of the Ring of Fire to simultaneously attack us from all around didn't happen. Thankfully, Hamas jumped the gun too early. And thankfully, they themselves surprised Hezbollah and Iran. And thankfully, Iran and Hezbollah did not join them immediately,

but they realized that the bear is now awake and probably it's not the right time to do it. And that was their mistake.

But I do believe with all of my heart that at least, as an Israeli, finally I see a realization that Zionism is not and cannot be based on the success of men. But it's the plan of God to return us back to our ancestral homeland is not because we're so good. It's because He's so good. It's not because we are so successful. It's because He is faithful. And I see recently, honestly, I see an exodus of Israelis from secularism towards spirituality. And from hedonism and materialism also towards where is God here because we sense God is in the business.

CHRIS: And there's also many stories coming out of Gaza and Lebanon of soldiers that have experienced miracles. And so I think that, too, adds to this sense of God is with us and God is real. So I think that's really a remarkable thing happening.

AMIR: Do you see other communities in the Middle East that are struggling and are experiencing that as well? I mean, you traveled, not only been to Israel, you traveled around.

CHRIS: Yeah, yeah, sure.

AMIR: So where else have you been in the Middle East?

CHRIS: Well, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, North East Syria, yeah. And there are many communities struggling, in particular, the Christian communities. We were there in Iraq and Kurdistan during the rise of ISIS, where people were given four choices. Well, they could convert or they could die, or they could pay the jizya tax or they could leave the area. So those are the choices that many Christians had to make in Kurdistan, in Syria, as ISIS was exploding for several, well, few years back in the...

AMIR: ...So when you see all the young people marching the streets of London or Paris or Berlin or New York with the stupidity of pro-Islam, and you've been to those areas affected by the jihadists, what do you think?

CHRIS: Well, they need to come to Kurdistan, or they need to be informed about what Islam's true nature is. And they do want to eradicate the Christian community. They want to eradicate Israel. They have a global worldwide agenda to establish a caliphate that could be the Sunni or the Shiite, and that's pretty well spelled out in the Quran. So, and I think that's what people need to understand right now, not only the role of Israel and the biblical role of Israel, but know what our enemy is plotting and planning. That's what Hamas wanted to do, Hezbollah, Iran, the Houthis. It's going on in the US right now. It's going on in the streets of London and the streets of capitals where Islam is really rising. And it's alarming.

AMIR: And Islam is being embraced by the far left.

CHRIS: Yeah, it's this odd red-green alliance.

AMIR: Isn't that amazing?

CHRIS: Yeah.

AMIR: That's what I call strong delusion.

CHRIS: Yeah.

AMIR: I mean, you know, somebody told me, somebody who was a refugee from Iran, he said that it was exactly what happened before the rise of the Ayatollah Khomeini. He said, it was the left, the intellectuals, and the communists in Iran that actually thought that bringing Khomeini will actually "liberate" Iran from the tyranny and corruption of the Shah. And the first thing he did when he came was slaughtering those professors and doctors and all of those. Because he realized,

“I don’t need them around me. They’re going to turn on me later on.” So it seems like, it’s like a chicken rooting for KFC.

CHRIS: Yeah. [Laughter]

AMIR: So, Chris, what are your plans for the future? As we’re landing this interview, I mean, you’ve been doing this reporting for 25 years. What else do you do besides that? I know that you’ve been working on some projects.

CHRIS: Yeah, yeah. Well, we have two projects. One is called “Exploring The Land Of The Bible.” It’s an eight-part series on—As you would as a tour guide, where you would go and see the land of the Bible from Caesarea to Megiddo to Masada to Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives to the city...

AMIR: ...Each episode is one site?

CHRIS: Pretty much, yeah. Yeah, we have one that goes from Jerusalem to Masada, that includes the Dead Sea. But we have Caesarea, Megiddo, the Galilee. But yeah, each one of these eight segments goes in a different part of the Bible.



AMIR: So in the lower third of the screen, we’re going to put up your website. Do you have a website?

CHRIS: Don’t have a website just yet. We’ll try to get that to you.

AMIR: All right. But how do people can get in touch with you? Social media?

CHRIS: Social media: “Chris Mitchell CBN News Jerusalem,” that’s the Facebook page. And the other series is one we’re working on right now and we just did an interview with you concerning that. Its title right now is called “Israel, History, Prophecy and What You Need to

Know.” And especially in the last two years, people have been misinformed, they’ve been misled by some of the news coming out of Israel where people are becoming uncertain about Israel. Is this really the people of the Bible? Are they colonists? Are they usurpers? Well, “Palestine from the River to the Sea”; isn’t that logical? Let’s have a two-state solution. So that’s where we’re trying to help educate. And the first episode is called “From Abraham to Today’s Headlines.” The next one, “The Miracle of Israel.” Third one, “Palestine from the River to the Sea, What’s Really Behind That?” “Christian Persecution and Christian Revival.” “Prophecy Unfolding in the Middle East. And the last one is “Rendezvous in Jerusalem, a Call to Pastors, Prayer, and Prophecy.” Because we know the end of the story will end up in Jerusalem. And I wrote a book called *Dateline Jerusalem* in 2013. And the basis of the book was 2000 years ago, all roads led to Rome; 2000 years later, all roads are leading to Jerusalem. And that’s where it all ends. And so people need to



be in prayer, they need to understand the Bible, they need to read your books about Ezekiel and Daniel and Revelation to understand the times. And I think it’s so critical for the body to be in prayer, and to read the Bible, and to understand the times.

And what are they supposed to do? As a father, as a mother, as a sister, a brother, what is their role? Everybody has a plan. God has a plan for each and every person. And so how can they fulfill that plan until He comes or when we see Him so that when we see Him face to face, He can say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” And I think that’s hopefully the goal of all of us and that could be our reward when we finally see Him face to face.

AMIR: Beautiful. Well, Chris, first of all, all the best and may God bless those two projects. I know that you put a lot of effort in... I’ve seen a few clips of this amazing tour through Israel and

all of that. Beautiful, beautiful, very well done. So hopefully a lot of people will get a hold of it and be educated. Thank you for your faithfulness. Thank you for your service. Thank you for who you are. And God bless you.

CHRIS: Thanks, Amir. Great to be with you.

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