

## What Messianic Jewish Leaders Should Discuss with the Christian Church about the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

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### INTRODUCTION

Many of us laboring in Jewish Ministry were elated recently with the finding of the Pew project “*A Portrait Of Jewish Americans*” (Religion and Public Life Project, October 2013). According to the poll, 34% declared that “believing Jesus was the messiah is compatible with being Jewish”. On the one hand, this is encouraging. Intermarriage and secularization has been eroding the long held erroneous belief that Jews can’t believe in Jesus and still be Jewish. On the other hand, the news is not so good. This same 34% also represents a growing liberal and secularized worldview that rejects long held Judeo-Christian values and morality. Only 40% say they believe “the land that is now Israel was given by God to the Jewish People.”

Many American Jews expressed reservations about Israel’s approach to the peace process. Just 38% say the Israeli government is making a sincere effort to establish peace with the Palestinians. And just 17% of American Jews think the continued building of settlements in the West Bank is helpful to Israel’s security; 44% say that settlement construction hurts Israel’s own security interests.

I share these statistics because these attitudes now mirror the views of many Christian leaders, even those who declare themselves to be evangelicals. In particular, we are losing the battle among the younger generations of Christians, especially those referred to as *Millennials* (those born between 1981-1996).

As Wayne Hilsden wrote in a November 2014 article in *Ministry Today* “A century ago, respected Christian scholars and prominent church statesman propelled Zionism. But today, growing anti-Zionism characterizes a younger Christian cohort. As recently as a decade ago, most evangelicals regarded Israel as a modern miracle and marker of God’s unfolding plan. But today, growing numbers of young people are expressing serious doubts about these assumptions.”

What follows is an overview of what I believe to be the most important issues we should be discussing with church leaders about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, specifically the dangers and misinformation found within: 1) the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Movement, 2) the “Christ and the Checkpoint” positions against Christian Zionism and a literal interpretation of bible prophecy concerning Israel 3) the erroneous doctrines of Replacement Theology and arguments against Israel's covenanted right to the land, and 4) the assertion of moral equivalency. My aim is to present the leading tenets and assumptions of these anti-Israeli positions—the Biblical, historical or political justifications for *what* their advocates believe and *why*—and my objections based on historical fact and biblical truth. Although this paper will only touch briefly on what most certainly are complex issues, I hope to help us organize our thoughts and discourse so we may dialogue and contend more effectively not only with Christian leaders, but, perhaps more importantly, with their sons and daughters.

## THE BOYCOTT, DIVESTMENT AND SANCTIONS (BDS) MOVEMENT

Known simply as BDS, this movement has grown into a worldwide campaign demanding academic, cultural and consumer boycotts of Israeli institutions and businesses, divestments from Israeli banks and commerce, economic sanctions against trade and military embargos. A strategy backed by Arab nations, international NGOs, pro-Palestinian activists and academics worldwide, proponents describe BDS as a “humanitarian movement bathed in justice”. Israel is characterized as a settler state that continues to colonize and uproot the indigenous people of Palestine. Israel has also been aligned with North Korea and Iran as a rogue nation.

The late Nelson Mandela helped to lay the groundwork for this movement when he accused Israel of being a “colonial oppressor” and “apartheid state,” during a speech he gave at the “International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People” back in 1997. “We know too well that our [ South Africa’s] freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians” . Former South African Anglican bishop Desmond Tutu carried on the crusade building it into an International movement in 2002. He modeled it after the highly successful disinvestment campaign waged against South Africa's apartheid system.

The consequences for Israel are extreme—and only beginning. Divestment could potentially brutalize Israel's economy. Kuwait, for example, recently boycotted 50 Israeli companies, canceling contracts worth billions of dollars. Zaid Shuaibi, a spokesperson for the Palestinian BDS National Committee, called this a “landmark decision,” as “international companies will now pay an even heavier price for participating in Israeli violations of international law.”<sup>1</sup> The threat of sanctions is increasing. In October 2014, BDS called for a global military embargo against Israel organized by the United Nations, citing war crimes. The BDS central committee delivered a petition to the U.N. Secretary General with 60,000 signatures, “including Nobel Laureates, artists and public intellectuals,” calling for a “legally binding military embargo” and citing the complicity of the United States and the European Union, among others, in crimes perpetrated by Israel. The petition reads: “By importing and exporting arms to Israel and facilitating the development of Israeli military technology, governments are effectively sending a clear message of approval for Israel’s military aggression, including its war crimes and possible crimes against humanity.”<sup>2</sup>

Academic boycotts are also increasing. In October, more than 500 anthropologists around the world signed a petition to boycott Israeli academic institutions.<sup>3</sup> In a grassroots movement seeking to silence any critique of BDS, leading U.S. professors, artists, writers, filmmakers, and physicians recently signed a petition condemning those who condemn BDS.<sup>4</sup>

So what is the truth behind the rhetoric? In his formative exposé, *The BDS War Against Israel*, Jed

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1 <http://www.bdsmovement.net/2014/kuwait-to-boycott-50-companies-12770>

2 <http://www.bdsmovement.net/2014/more-than-60000-signatories-including-nobel-prize-laureates-celebrities-and-religious-organizations-call-for-military-embargo-on-israel-ahead-of-gaza-donors-conference-12736>

3 <http://www.bdsmovement.net/2014/more-than-500-anthropologists-back-academic-boycott-of-israel-12755>

4 <http://www.bdsmovement.net/2014/judith-butler-rashid-khalidi-and-over-150-other-scholars-condemn-censorship-intimidation-of-israel-critics-11798>

Babbin identifies the “Orwellian campaign” of lies behind the ideological warfare of the BDS movement, first articulated by Barghouti in his 2011 book, *Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions; The Global Struggle for Palestinian Rights*. The misinformation campaign tries to persuade global opinion that BDS seeks peace and justice, aims to improve the lives of Palestinians and support them as they seek independence. Ramzy Baroud, author of *My Father was a Freedom Fighter: Gaza's Untold Story*, declares that, “BDS has opened up whole new ground for the Palestinian struggle for freedom, justice and human rights which is based on universally recognized principles.”<sup>5</sup> Raji Sourani, director of the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, recipient of the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Award for Human Rights, and heralded twice by Amnesty International, describes BDS in the following terms: “It is a clear example of civil society acting as the conscience of the world, and standing up for human rights when those in power refuse to do so.”<sup>6</sup>

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5 Ramzy Baroud, “Palestine's Global Battle Must be Won,” in *Generation Palestine: Voices from the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement*, ed. Rich Wiles, p. 3

6 Raji Sourani, “Why Palestinians Called for BDS,” in *Generation Palestine: Voices from the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement*, ed. Rich Wiles, p. 61

The true agenda of BDS is straightforward and simple- to destroy Israel. BDS is not only calling for an “end to the occupation” but the creation of a “one-state solution.” Founder Omar Barghouti seeks to rename Israel as *Palestine*, and declares, “I am completely and categorically against bi-nationalism because it assumes that there are two nations with equal moral claims to the land.” John Spritzer, pro-BDS author, agrees: “I think the BDS movement will gain strength from forthrightly explaining why Israel has no right to exist.”<sup>7</sup>

To expose the BDS agenda for what it is—an effort to eradicate Israel—following is a list of BDS claims and the facts refuting the lies.<sup>8</sup>

1: “*Israel is an apartheid state.*” In truth, 20 percent of Israel's population are Israeli Arabs—who are represented in the Knesset (12 members currently), have the right to vote, and serve on Israel's Supreme Court. Arabs cannot serve in the military (for possibly divided loyalties) but enjoy *all other rights* as Israeli citizens.

2: “*Israel is guilty of war crimes and genocide.*” In truth, during the Lebanese conflict of 2006, the source of war-crimes accusations, Hizballah altered photographs to turn global opinion against Israel. The U.N. Human Rights Council mission investigated alleged crimes and later concluded that it was (and indeed still is) *the policy of Hamas to purposefully target civilians*, whereas civilian deaths at Israeli hands were unintentional. Since Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005, terrorists have fired more than 11,000 rockets into Israel. Over 5 million Israelis are currently living under threat of rocket attacks.

3: “*The Gaza Blockade and West Bank barrier walls are colonialist oppression.*” In truth, the U.N.-appointed Palmer investigation affirmed that the Gaza Blockade “complied with the requirements of international law.” The Israeli soldiers who boarded the Turkish ship *Mavi Marmara* during the 2010 blockade were not the aggressors, but witnesses report that IDF soldiers were attacked. Regarding Israel's barrier fence, the International Court of Justice decided in 2004 that wall protecting Israel was illegal—overturning Article 51 of Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter, which addresses the “inherent right” of a collective or nation to “self-defense.” Although Israel was not breaking international law, it nevertheless rerouted the fence out of the West Bank.

4: “*Jewish law allows mass murder.*” This is a complete and utter fabrication. In truth, it was only the Amalekites—seen by God as evil incarnate—who were justly eradicated (and of whom no ancestors remain). Israel does not equate its enemies with the Amalekites, and both Jewish civil and religious law prohibits mass murder.

5: “*Israel is guilty of ethnic cleansing.*” In fact, there have never been massacres in Israel. Civilians have never been intentionally targeted or forcibly expelled from the land. On the contrary, according to Ralph Galloway of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), “The Arab states do not want to solve the refugee problem. They want to keep it as an open sore, as an affront to the United Nations, and as a weapon against Israel. Arab leaders do not give a damn whether Arab refugees live or die.”<sup>9</sup> Galloway made this statement in 1958—and it remains true. Babbín observes: “...the Arab nations have no regard for the lives or fortunes of the Palestinians. They are far more interested in maintaining the Palestinians as a useful

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7 [http://www.stopbds.com/?page\\_id=48](http://www.stopbds.com/?page_id=48)

8 Babbín, pp. 19-38

9 <http://www.eretzyisrael.org>, as quoted in Babbín, p. 36

weapon against Israel than in helping the Palestinians economically, socially, or in any other way. Arab nations have been notably absent from the 'peace process' between Israel and Palestinians, engineered at times by the U.S. They were not at the negotiating table in 2000, 2003, 2005, or 2008. They have not been at the table in the 2014 round....”<sup>10</sup>

6: “Israel is breaking 1947 U.N. Resolution 181, the 'right of return.'” BDS is calling for “The right of Palestinian refugees to return to the homes and lands from which they were displaced and dispossessed in 1948,”<sup>11</sup> a plan which would virtually double the population of Israel. In truth, when Israel was partitioned following this resolution's plan, roughly 650,000 Palestinian Arabs left the territory. Now Palestinian “refugees” number 4.7 million, and, according to BDS, they all have the right to become Israeli citizens. If this were to occur, the “Jewish state” would be ruled by Sharia law, Jews having become the minority. The year following Resolution 181, Resolution 184 sought to clarify that only the original emigrants were invited to return.

It is vital to note that the funds supporting BDS are largely transported through money laundering—primary funders sending funds through NGOs. Canada, for example, filters its monies through KAIROS; the U.K., Ireland, and the EU use Trocaire, Mossawa, and Christian Aid; and the Soros' Open Society, Ford Foundation and the Netherlands (via Oxfam-NOVIB) employ Human Rights Watch.<sup>12</sup>

Sadly, Christians are among some of the most vocal supporters of BDS—a strategy encouraged by BDS leaders. In the United States, the Presbyterian Church (USA) was among the first to support BDS, divesting its holdings from three US corporations with interests in Israel (Hewlett Packard, Motorola Solutions and Caterpillar). They have also widely promoted a study guide called “Zionism Unsettled” on their online church store. In the 76-page pamphlet, Zionism is characterized as a “a struggle for colonial and racist supremacist privilege.” Quakers in three states, the US Mennonite Central Committee, and the Central Pacific Conference of the United Church of Christ have also voted for boycotts, together with several other mainline denominations in the US, Canada, the UK and EU, together with the World Council of Churches, which published its “Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI)” supporting BDS.

Many dangerous myths are being circulated to turn world opinion against the State of Israel and the Jewish People, and these myths must be unmasked. To understand the truth of Israel's history, a good source is: [www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/myths3/mftoc.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/myths3/mftoc.html)

## **CHRIST AT THE CHECKPOINT AND QUESTIONS OF ESCHATOLOGY**

What do evangelical Palestinian Christians believe about Israel and Zionism? The National Coalition of Christian Organizations in Palestine and KAIROS Palestine blame Israel directly for the violence. Addressing Israel, the organizations published the following: “love is possible, coexistence is possible.... The concept of killing so easily hundreds of men, women and children must change. Lords

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10 Babbin, p. 36

11 Babbin, Jed. *The BDS War Against Israel: The Orwellian Campaign to Destroy Israel Through Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions* (London Center for Policy Research, 2014), p. ix

12 Babbin, pp. 85-86

of war, you are on the wrong path. All the killings, all your violence, all your weapons will not bring you security and will not take away your fear.” The Palestinian Authority, they assert, “has chosen this path of peace”<sup>13</sup>

In March 2010, Bethlehem Bible College and Palestinian evangelicals organized the “Christ at the Checkpoint” conference, whose stated goals included the following:

- 1) Empower and encourage the Palestinian church.
- 2) Expose the realities of the injustices in the Palestinian Territories and create awareness of the obstacles to reconciliation and peace.
- 3) Create a platform for serious engagement with Christian Zionism and an open forum for ongoing dialogue between all positions within the Evangelical theological spectrum.
- 4) Motivate participants to become advocates for the reconciling work of the church in Palestine/Israel and its ramifications for the Middle East and the world.<sup>14</sup>

Tony Campolo, baptist pastor, prominent voice of the Evangelical left, and former “spiritual advisor” to Bill Clinton, was one of 13 presenters. In his presentation, Campolo cited French sociologist Emil Durkheim, who wrote that “Religion is nothing more than a process wherein people end up worshiping a god that is little more than an incarnation of their own traits and values”—Campolo then aligning Durkheim with the apostle Paul in Romans 1:19-25, asserting, “We Americans have created God in our own image.”<sup>15</sup> That image, he believes, is fraught with anti-Biblical nationalism, imperialism and racism, demonstrated in our policies toward Israel—condemning anti-Semitism while attacking Arabs—and justified by erroneous dispensationalist eschatology, which “discourages any kind of social action that would promote God's justice in the world.”<sup>16</sup> More specifically, “Evangelicalism in general, and the Charismatic movement in particular,” Campolo observes, “are in danger of being absorbed by a Dispensationalist theology that legitimates the removal of Arabs from the Holy Land.”<sup>17</sup>

Alex Awad, Professor and Dean of Bethlehem Bible College, condemned the “global, harmful effects of Christian Zionism” resulting from three flagrant errors: “First, militarizing the church and making the church stand for war and aggression in the name of God. Second, cultivating a culture of hate against Muslims, Arabs, and Palestinians. Third, promoting an anti-peace culture and agenda within the church.”<sup>18</sup>

Stephen Sizer, author of *Zion's Christian Soldiers? The Bible, Israel and the Church* (2007) and *Christian Zionism: Road-map to Armageddon?* (2004), is a leading critic of Christian Zionism. Sizer examines the historical trajectory and aims of Christian Zionism—from its origins in Britain with Lord

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13 <http://www.bdsmovement.net/2014/diplomatic-pressure-for-peace-a-call-for-sanctions-from-palestinian-christians-12463>

14 [www.ChristAtTheCheckpoint.com](http://www.ChristAtTheCheckpoint.com)

15 Tony Campolo, “The Ethical Responsibility of the American Church towards Palestinian Christians,” in *Christ at the Checkpoint: Theology in the Service of Justice and Peace*, ed. Paul Alexander, p. 128

16 Campolo, ed. Alexander, p. 135

17 Campolo, ed. Alexander, back jacket

18 Alex Awad, “Palestinian Christians in the Shadow of Christian Zionism,” in *Christ at the Checkpoint: Theology in the Service of Justice and Peace*, ed. Paul Alexander, p. 10

Shaftesbury (how his theories of restorationism impacted British foreign policy), to the Balfour Declaration and the articulation of the Zionist vision, to the birth of Dispensationalism in America circa 1859, leading to the rise of anti-Semitism and the subsequent vast proliferation and diversification of Christian Zionism, in liberal and conservative camps. Sizer explicates the Christian Zionists' "literal futurist hermeneutic" of the Bible and the return of the Jews to Zion—the question of Jerusalem and "the eternal and exclusive Jewish capital," the rebuilding of the temple only for desecration—and how these inform political ideology: the restorationism facilitating aliyah from Russia and Eastern Europe, sustaining West Bank settlements, and, finally, *opposing peace and hastening Armageddon*.

The crux of Sizer's argument is the issue of "literalist hermeneutics." Sizer, quoting L.S. Chafer, sums up "the outstanding characteristic of the dispensationalist" to believe "every statement of the Bible" and to give it "the plain, natural meaning its words imply."<sup>19</sup> Sizer proposes three "inherent problems" resulting from this literalist hermeneutic, which leads to the belief that the Jews remain God's Chosen People, that there is coming a final restoration of Jews to the land of Israel, or Zion, that Eretz, or greater Israel, is also part of the Jewish inheritance, that Jerusalem is the eternal, exclusive and undivided capital of Israel or Zion, that the temple must be rebuilt in order to be desecrated, and that the future is nothing but bleak—that the battle of Armageddon will inevitably destroy two-thirds of the Jews. Sizer argues that there are fundamental errors within these views, namely that: "1) God's promises of blessings are isolated from their covenantal context; 2) the interpretation of Scripture by Jesus and the apostles is ignored, and 3) the sacralizing of Zionism ultimately subordinates the cross."<sup>20</sup>

In *Has the Church Replaced Israel?*, Michael Vlach traces supersessionism from the early Patristic era through the Middle Ages, Reformation and modern era, examining its hermeneutics and building a case for the restoration of national Israel. Vlach argues that God reaffirms the restoration of Israel in the New Testament repeatedly, in such Scriptures as Matthew 9:28/Luke 22:30, Matthew 23:37-39/Luke 13:35, Luke 21:24, Acts 1:6, and Romans 11.<sup>21</sup> Vlach points out, citing Arnold Fruchtenbaum's "Israel and the Church," that "the title *Israel* is used a total of 73 times in the New Testament, but it is always used of ethnic Jews."<sup>22</sup> Israel is still referred to *as a nation*, in other words, after the church was established at Pentecost.

One need not be a dispensationalist to espouse Israel's right to the land or interpret promises in the bible to restore Israel literally. Many prominent theologians, including Reform scholars and those who hold to an Amillennial, Postmillennial or historic Premillennial eschatological view support Israel's right to exist and believe in God's irrevocable covenant relationship with the Jewish People.

## **THE THEOLOGY OF THE LAND AND REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY**

One "Christ at the Checkpoint" presenter, Salim Munayer, began his presentation with a quote from theologian Walter Brueggemann's treatise, *Land*:

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19 Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism*, p. 120

20 Sizer, *Christian Zionism*, p. 204

21 Mathew Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel?* (B&H Publishing Group, 2010), p. 182

22 Vlach, p. 199

Land is given in covenant. Israel's central task is to keep it so, never to perceive its land in a social or historical vacuum. In a vacuum all kinds of coercive deeds are possible and even legitimate. But they speak no words, give no gifts, keep no promises.<sup>23</sup>

Removing the land of Israel from its current geo-political politics to adhere to a covenant given to Abraham thousands of years prior is tantamount, according to Brueggemann, to placing Israel in a vacuum—one that invites coercion and is, in its essence, breaking God's commandments to “love your enemy.” According to scholars aligned with this perspective, a “renewed reading” is required of the Abrahamic promises, which “have now been extended to include the whole worlds, and all believers in Christ the Messiah” and which now replaces the “obsolete territorial land covenant” that “ignores to a large extent Christ's new covenant of God's Kingdom that through his spirit encompasses all believers everywhere.”<sup>i</sup> Manfred Kohl concludes in Munayer’s “Towards a Theology of Land: A Christian Answer to the Israeli-Arab Conflict” that “From a biblical perspective...since the Christ event the promise of the territorial land no longer has any significance.”<sup>ii</sup>

While Arab nations, Munayer says, have been guilty of “perpetuating the conflict in a number of ways, and for using it as an excuse for their own mismanagement,<sup>iii</sup> the “first action” of the decision in June 1928 “to bar a refugee return...based on the premise that Israel must be a Jewish state, has led to other abuses.”<sup>iv</sup> Munayer quotes Edward W. Said’s “Afterword: the Consequences of 1948” to detail the abuses resulting from Israel's position that it has a Biblical, covenantal right to the land, including:

[O]bsessive, excessive, measures about terrorism, the endless fencing in, the interrogations, the legal justification of torture...the discriminations against Israeli Palestinians, the fear and contempt, the bellicosity, all aimed at the Palestinians—in Israel and in other countries—who challenge this vision by their very existence.<sup>24</sup>

The doctrine driving the logic that Israel's self-defense is based on false premises, with subsequent abuses against the Palestinians, is nothing more than Replacement Theology or Supersessionism—the doctrine that the physical land and the Jewish nation of Israel were replaced by a spiritual Zion and the Body of Christ, the Church. Supersessionism asserts that it was the wrath of God against the Jews—who were responsible for killing their savior—that compelled God to replace the Jews as God's chosen people with the Church, just as the Mosaic covenant was replaced by the New Covenant.

Although we find traces of potential warnings against Supersessionism in the Book of Romans, it seems Paul attacks it at its roots and eradicates the problem at least in Rome until well into the second century. But from Justin's time forward, an increasingly hostile Christian disposition developed toward not only the Jewish People, the God of the Hebrew Bible (the demiurge), and Jewish cultural expression of any variety, but even Christian antagonism toward the Torah itself.

The Hebrew Bible was the only sound historical and theological foundation for Christianity, as Paul makes plain. Yet an anti-Hebrew Bible sentiment was deliberately fostered by Marcion, a brilliant businessman and the son of a Christian bishop who chose to castigate all things Jewish on principle. He

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23 Quoted in Salim Munayer, “Theology of the Land,” in *Christ at the Checkpoint: Theology in the Service of Justice and Peace*, ed. Paul Alexander, p. 30

24 *Ibid*



contended that the New Testament was a revelation of the real God and Father of Yeshua, the loving God of spirit and grace, as opposed to the Jewish God of the Hebrew Bible, a lesser and hateful deity who was quite willing to preoccupy himself with material creation. Anything associated with Jewish earthly concerns and life on the planet was considered vastly inferior to all things spiritual and heavenly. Jews, Jewish religion and culture, even Jewish natural affinity with the Promised Land and patriotism, were regarded as carnal, this worldly, inferior, and “Jewish.”

Unfortunately, while Marcion and his Gnostic-informed condemnation of the Hebrew Bible was considered heretical and he himself and his doctrines were condemned by Church authorities, many Christians and Christian leaders have been seriously impacted by this anti-Hebrew Bible, anti-Jewish practice, and anti-Torah sentiment. Scholars and preachers guilty of isogesis (reading things into the Scripture that are not there) over the centuries have attempted to make the New Testament party to that same anti-Hebrew Bible mentality.

For historical reasons too complex to explain here, the Church fathers sought to create a new “wall of partition” between the true Christian faith, the Jews (including Jewish Believers) and all things Jewish. Ignoring, even despising their Hebraic roots, they firmly established and instituted an anti-Judaic Christian theology of Israel. This would not only result in thousands of assaults upon Jewish People over the next 1,500 years or so, but crippled Christian self-understanding. This result can be portrayed as a one-legged runner attempting to run a marathon. He will not only make bad time, he will never make it at all. God never intended this “one-legged” identity resulting from the rejection of the “elder brother” for the Body of Messiah. This historic Christian negation of all things Jewish assured Jewish resistance to the Gospel message in the centuries that followed.

This Christian elitist antipathy toward Jews and Judaism became woven into the fabric of Christian theology and thereby into Western civilization. Martin Luther and the other reformers inherited this anti-Jewish theological posture and cultural prejudice. Luther, heralded as the Father of the Reformation and an avid student of Paul, is credited for his justification by faith emphasis as newly discovered in Romans. But in the processing of his new insights, he took severe liberties to castigate the Jewish People, even Jewish Believers in Yeshua in his later works. His instilled cultural dread of Jews and all things Jewish, as fostered both by his Augustinian theological training and blatant 16th century cultural prejudices, pushed him into the entirely unrealistic perspective of presuming that newly established European Protestantism was at risk of being fully swallowed up by massive Christian conversion to Judaism. This bizarre perspective led Luther to pen, during the final decade of his life, some of the most horrific anti-Semitic views ever written. These writings informed much of the Western expressions of anti-Semitism over the centuries that followed, including the Holocaust and has contributed to Islamic attacks upon “All Israel” today.

## **THE PROBLEM OF MORAL EQUIVALENCY**

One last important topic to address is the strategy of the liberal media to criticize any objection to assessing the crimes perpetrated by the Palestinians and crimes by the IDF as *morally equivalent*. In other words, both sides have killed civilians, both are guilty, and both are equally at fault. In fact, Palestinians, the media asserts, kill Israelis because Israelis kill Palestinians. While I am a Jewish

Believer and clearly a Zionist, I want to state that I do not support every military strategy or action taken by Israel. Yet, the facts are the fact. Hamas establishes military silos in churches, stockpiles weapons in civilian homes, and aims—following explicit orders within its military policies—to target Israeli citizens and use its own Palestinian residents in Gaza, including Palestinian children, as human shields. Moral equivalency compares suicide bombings by terrorists against civilians to retaliation by Israel against legitimate Hamas military installations and troops.

Joel Mowbrey, in “Moral Equivalence in the Middle East,” from *TownHall.com* in 2003, observes the following: :

The coverage of the [recent] “violence”... has largely read like the equivalent of a chess match. Hamas refuses to halt suicide bombs. Israel targets a top Hamas leader. Suicide bombing in Jerusalem kills 16. Israel “retaliates” with a strike in Gaza. What’s at work is probably not anti-semitism, but a misguided attempt at objectivity. But reporting “facts” in a moral vacuum is not objectivity; it is, in fact, just the opposite. Absent proper context, the situation can seem as if it is two equally justifiable sides making moves and countermoves, nothing more.<sup>25</sup>

Yaacov Lozowick, in *Right to Exist: A Moral Defense of Israel's Wars*, disentangles the Byzantine *cause-effect* scenarios and *if-they-did-this-and-we-did-that* comparisons raging within the moral equivalency debate:

Restricting the freedom of movement of entire communities is immoral. Refraining from these restrictions when there is unequivocal proof that this will lead to the murder of innocents is worse, because movement restricted can later be granted, while dead will never live again. Demolishing the homes of civilians merely because a family member has committed a crime is immoral. If, however,... potential suicide murderers... will refrain from killing out of fear that their mothers will become homeless, it would be immoral to leave the Palestinian mothers untouched in their homes while Israeli children die on their school buses. Accidentally killing noncombatants in the cross fire of battles being fought in the middle of cities is immoral, unless... refraining from fighting in the Palestinian cities inevitably means the Palestinians will use the safe havens of their cities to plan, prepare and launch ever more murderous attacks on Jewish noncombatants. These concrete examples and others like them demonstrate the moral considerations that Israelis... have been dealing with since the Palestinians proudly decided to use suicide murder as their primary weapon.<sup>26</sup>

These two examples illustrate just how discussions of “moves and countermoves,” rhetoric that inherently aims to equate good and evil, are very much in the public discourse—and have significantly influenced the perspectives of Christian leaders and, in particular, a younger generation of Christians and Messianic Jews struggling with what to believe concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

## CONCLUSION

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<sup>25</sup> [http://townhall.com/columnists/joelmowbray/2003/06/16/moral\\_equivalence\\_in\\_the\\_middle\\_east](http://townhall.com/columnists/joelmowbray/2003/06/16/moral_equivalence_in_the_middle_east)

<sup>26</sup> Yaacov Lozowick, *Right to Exist: A Moral Defense of Israel's Wars*, Doubleday, 2003 p.260, cited in Wikipedia

Sadly, college students are rallying behind the BDS movement, taking up Replacement Theology, and agreeing with the rhetorical arguments of moral equivalency at alarming rates. Students are being lectured that “Zionism is racism, that Israel perpetrates genocide and ethnic cleansing, and therefore the Jewish state should be dismantled.”<sup>27</sup> According to the Anti-Defamation League, more than 75 anti-Israel events were reported in the fall of 2014—more than double from the previous year. According to the ADL, “Student groups hosted at least 374 anti-Israel events during the 2013-2014 academic year, with about 40 percent of them focused on how to initiate Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaigns on campus.”<sup>28</sup>

In *Antisemitism on the Campus: Past & Present*, editor Eunice Pollack observes that “Although overt antisemitism declined in the West in the aftermath of the Holocaust, over the last half century it has reemerged, spread, and increasingly intensified. Perhaps most ominously, the world's oldest and longest hatred has reappeared in the universities, where it has acquired a high profile, a new veneer and even academic garb. There the 'old-new antisemitism,' though often cloaked in its latest attire, has been granted a certain legitimacy.”<sup>29</sup>

In *Academics Against Israel and the Jews*, editor Manfred Gerstenfeld quotes a former Israeli ambassador to the European Union, Harry Kney-Tal, who described his concerns about an insidious ideology pervading the views of West European leaders and others “raised on the Palestinian Arab view of events”:

That narrative, which is reinforced by Israeli or former Israeli researchers, has nearly totally taken over the academic, political and media discussion of the issues.... It is appropriate to the popular worldview in Europe nowadays, which is pacifist and post-modernist, full of guilt toward former colonies and full of sympathy for oppressed nations demanding self-determination. It also serves electoral interests as well as the traditional interests of *Realpolitik*, which makes up a large part of E.U. Policy.<sup>30</sup>

We must face the reality that this discussion, indeed every word on these issues from the point of view of our detractors, falls under the long shadow of postmodernism and deconstruction. Our so-called patriarchal, Platonic, colonialist tropes, our religious assumptions and Zionist aims, from their perspective, are *always already* problematized. To most contemporary scholars, these papers are, at best, antiquated and irrelevant; more to the point, our assumptions and arguments, our debates of right and wrong, truth and falsehood—any authoritative claims of any ideology—are silenced in a grounded materialism that knows no transcendence and dismisses moral absolutes as intolerance and ignorance, at best.

This “narrative” of pacifism, post-colonialism, and postmodernism—seasoned with Marxist-Socialist critique of those who wield wealth and modes of producing wealth (Occupy Wall Street, whose motto is “We kick the ass of the ruling class”)—is the narrative informing the opinions of the vast majority of college students influenced by liberal professors, and Christian leaders influenced by liberal media, in

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27 Tammi Rossman-Benjamin, “The Academic Legitimization of Anti-Zionism and Efforts to Combat It: A Case Study,” in *Antisemitism on the Campus: Past & Present*, ed. Eunice G. Pollack (Academic Studies Press, 2011), p. 393

28 <http://www.jta.org/2014/10/26/news-opinion>

29 Pollack, p. vii

30 Manfred Gerstenfeld, *Academics Against Israel and the Jews* (Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 2007), p. 24

the United States, Canada, and in parts of Europe. At its extreme, this narrative takes up the rhetoric of anti-Semitism.

Gerstenfeld observes that “In its crudest form, Jews are demonized by being attributed with characteristics of their bitterest enemies. It is now well understood that comparing Israeli actions to those of the Nazis is not an isolated anti-Semitic phenomenon. This motif has been around for decades and does not only originate from Arab sources.”<sup>31</sup>

Alvin Rosenfeld, in “Responding to Campus-Based Anti-Zionism,” present models for confronting the ideological battle against Israel among college students. Rosenfeld suggests “providing extensive, variegated exposure to Israel—through courses, programs, cultural events, publications, and time spent in the country itself—and also by building constructive relations with sympathetic colleagues on campus,”<sup>32</sup> to strategies that expose abuses of academic freedom. What is needed, Rosenfeld concludes, is “the pursuit of balanced, honest scholarship.”

We, as Messianic leaders must participate in these balanced, honest, scholarly pursuits, speaking and publishing widely, in print and online, with the goal of reaching college-age students and Christian leaders seeking the truth on this matter. Only by boldly exposing these lies and speaking the truth in love may we turn a generation away from the demonization of the Jews and the ultimate plan to indoctrinate them in an effort to eliminate the state of Israel—God’s covenanted land and His Chosen People.

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- i Salim Munayer, “Theology of the Land,” in *Christ at the Checkpoint: Theology in the Service of Justice and Peace*, ed. Paul Alexander, p. 45
  - ii Manfred Kohl, quoted in Salim Munayer, “Theology of the Land,” in *Christ at the Checkpoint: Theology in the Service of Justice and Peace*, ed. Paul Alexander, p. 45
  - iii Salim Munayer, “Theology of the Land,” in *Christ at the Checkpoint: Theology in the Service of Justice and Peace*, ed. Paul Alexander, p. 53
  - iv *ibid*

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31 Gerstenfeld, p. 25

32 Alvin H. Rosenfeld, “Responding to Campus-Based Anti-Zionism: Two Models,” in Pollack, p. 414