

ISRAEL



His People, His Land, His Story



edited by FRED WRIGHT



Ten authors
reflect on Biblical
and historical themes
with contributions on
terrorism and peacemaking

Israel

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Ten Authors Reflect on Biblical and Historical Themes
with Contributions on Terrorism
and Peacemaking

Edited by

FRED WRIGHT

LOVE NEVER FAILS

THANKFUL BOOKS

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FOREWORD

Lady Sainsbury

Few books have the power to affect a reader's view of his or her world. This collection of essays by ten authors – Christians and Jews – although not claiming to be a definitive book, reflects on the past and future prospects for the Middle East and belongs to this category.

It is a must-read for all involved with the Middle East, whether as friends, commentators or intercessors. The writers ask how we interpret Israel in biblical terms and then put the modern state into its legal and historical context. With contributions from historians inside and outside the Land, they look at different Christian interventions as part of that history and the indigenous growth of messianic fellowships since 1967. If these are Jews as well as followers of Jesus, then their biblical significance has to be considered by the Christian Church, however small their proportion of the population. They also consider the plight of the Palestinian refugees, with their call on Christian compassion, giving the book a balanced viewpoint frequently lacking in writing on this subject.

This is not just another eschatological book; it has a prophetic element alongside the consideration of the threat of terrorism in the region and approaches to conflict resolution.

As a regular visitor to the Middle East, I warmly recommend this book to all with an interest in this region; written primarily for the church, it opens up new areas and questions for understanding and prayer. It serves as both an introduction for the newcomer and a corrective for the more experienced traveller, challenging assumptions and offering a fresh perspective on Israel.

Susan Sainsbury

SPIRITUAL INTIFADA OF PALESTINIAN CHRISTIANS AND MESSIANIC JEWS

Gershon Nerel

I owe special thanks to Rose Jenks and Ken Burnett for their kind linguistic assistance.

I would like to share with you a sensitive topic that I also call end-time thinking between Messianic Jews and Palestinian Christians. But first I would like to quote one verse from the epistle to the Romans: ‘For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?’ (11:15 NKJV). In my Hebrew Bible there is no question mark as there is at the end of some of the English texts. I think that there should be an exclamation mark instead of a question mark at the end of this unique verse.

In recent generations we have seen miraculous life from the dead among messianic believers, the first-fruits. This is the beginning of a large reformation. However, this does not mean that it is happening in a vacuum. In reality, Jewish believers in Yeshua (JBY) face serious problems in various arenas, especially in the field of theology. One salient example relates to the current theology of Palestinian Christianity. During the years 2000–04, the Palestinian *intifada* did not merely introduce armed hostilities that brought bloody suffering for both sides. It also unveiled and spearheaded an undeclared spiritual war against Israel.

Physical and spiritual warfare

The current *intifada*, which is a military and terrorist warfare, was recommenced by the Palestinians. However, it is far more than an armed

aggression. In fact, it also has the dimension of a massive spiritual battle. Palestinian warfare is taking place not only against Zionist Israel. We observe a spiritual *intifada* of Palestinian Christians against both Israel and her Christian friends around the world. This is *de facto* an attack against biblical end-time teaching and against Western Christianity. I believe that we need to have a special gift of discernment to see and to understand the times in which we live.

The present spiritual *intifada* is taking place among the historical churches of the Palestinians. It does not mean that it includes all Palestinian Christians. I do not want to generalise about all Palestinian Christians, but I do wish to mention the established churches in the Land, a tiny piece of land from the Jordan River west to the sea, where we see three major Palestinian blocs that have developed and maintain this spiritual *intifada* against Israel and against the Christian supporters of Israel: Palestinian Catholics, Palestinian Anglicans and Palestinian Lutherans. Each of these three denominations has a local Palestinian bishop: the Catholic (Latin) Patriarch Michel Sabbah, the Anglican bishop in Jerusalem Riah Abu El-Assal and the Lutheran bishop Munib Younan. They are involved in a comprehensive and sophisticated warfare on the theological level.

They have introduced into the churches a new Palestinian replacement theology. The Eastern Palestinian replacement theology, as it was in the early centuries, says that God actually has finished with Israel's election, and that the promises and the covenants with Israel are finished. Moreover, that there is no continuum between biblical and modern Israel; namely, that modern Israel is no longer the natural and legitimate continuation of biblical Israel. Such an approach has many consequences. When Palestinian prelates teach that the people and state of modern Israel are not the continuation of ancient Israel, one gets a 'cut' with the Bible, and almost automatically there is a 'cut' between the New Testament and the Old Testament – a denial of the oneness and completeness of the word of God.

The teaching of this theology is developed systematically, and is disseminated through the modern media, particularly through the Internet, and reaching from this tiny Land of Israel to the entire world. One must be aware of it and face the dangers of this teaching. People must be warned of what is happening and encouraged to follow the biblical way of thinking. What is happening with Israel affects the end-time reality of

our times, and the end-time reality of our faith. If this is not clear, then theologically and prophetically there is a total blackout.

Who represents the genuine mother church?

While Messianic Jews claim that they are the historical and authentic continuation of the first *Kehila*, i.e. the first entity/congregation of Jewish Yeshua-believers in the early centuries as it is described in the New Testament, one also finds the Palestinian claim that ‘the Arab Christians are *the* inheritors of the mother church in the Land’. These parallel identifications develop more and more within dissenting theological frameworks.

The pleading of Palestinian Christians to represent the genuine mother church automatically undermines the coherent identity of Messianic Jews about themselves being the undistorted succession of the early Jewish Yeshua-believers. If, on that basis, there is truth in the claim of Palestinian Christians that they represent the genuine teaching of the mother church in the Land, then actually the Hebraic message of Messianic Jews is not a novelty, to say the least. Then, in fact, there is no prophetic ‘new life from the dead’ among modern JBY – making the word of God irrelevant.

One could therefore ask the question: ‘If Israel has been displaced or replaced, then since in Romans 11:15 “the casting away of them” clearly refers to Israel (see also Romans 10:21), to whom could the accompanying declaration apply (“what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead!”) other than to Israel?’ It would be a grammatical absurdity to try and apply it to Palestinian and Gentile believers.

Palestinian Christians ‘become the inheritors of the Jewish mother church’ by manipulative exegesis. For example, they take the biblical text of Acts 2:11, where it mentions ‘Arabians’ and apply it to themselves. However, the whole passage there speaks about *Jewish* pilgrims who come to the Land for the Feast of Pentecost (and Passover) to celebrate with their Jewish brethren at the Temple, and there they were heard ‘. . . speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God’.

Thus, the context of this scene involves devout *Jews* ‘from every nation under heaven’ (Acts 2:5) – Jewish pilgrims from the diaspora who had come to Jerusalem for the Feasts of *Shavuot* (Pentecost) and *Pesach*, in order to fulfil the biblical commandment to come to the Temple of the Lord (Exod 23:14–17; Lev 23:15–17); namely, from Crete and Arabia,

etc., not Gentile Cretans and Arabians. Therefore when modern Palestinian Christians say, 'Those people are our ancestors,' they simply misuse the text. There are other examples too. One of the Palestinian priests, Elias Chacour, a Greek Catholic Melkite, wrote in his books: 'They, my ancestors, were the first to hear the Sermon on the Mount and to accompany the Lord from one peak to another during His life. The Christianity of the Holy Land is Palestinian . . .'

Palestinian churches, alongside historical churches, question the theological legitimacy of contemporary Messianic Jews. Palestinian Christians find no justification for a distinct Messianic Jewish entity outside of the traditional churches – churches which also claim that Messianic Jews have no apostolic succession. In other words, that JBY have no apostolic continuity, no apostolic authority, because their history was disconnected for centuries. In fact, it should be stressed that throughout history, the different churches did not allow the existence of corporate and free entities of Jewish believers in Yeshua.

However, New Testament Scripture explodes this false doctrine by the single statement in Romans 15:8: 'Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers [patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob]' (NKJV).

De-Judaisation of the Bible

Canon Naim Ateek, the Jerusalemite Anglican Palestinian minister, openly declares that he does not accept the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation. He puts it as follows: As a Christian, I cannot begin my study of the Bible from Genesis. What God did for the world in Christ far exceeded the best that the prophets predicted and anticipated.'

In a similar line, Palestinian Christians also talk about 'Jesus the first Palestinian', and write about 'Mary the Palestinian' or the 'Palestinian apostles'. This kind of exposition replaces the Jewish foundations of Holy Scripture. Actually, there is a growing tendency among Palestinian Christians towards the de-Judaisation of the Bible. At the same time, however, Jewish Yeshua-believers emphasise the point that Israel's role in the last stages of the end-times is focal in the Bible. For example, the biblical concepts of 'the last days', 'the last year' and 'the day of the

Lord' appear clearly within the context of Israel's return to the Land. Ezekiel's eschatological prophecy (ch. 37) about taking Israel to the 'valley', i.e. the Land of their forefathers, refers to taking them out of their graves in the diaspora, and restoring them to life, in a full reality. To deny this is to deny the validity of the Bible, to call the Almighty a liar.

While a partial regathering from north, south and east occurred in 536 BCE, at no point until the twentieth century CE did any regathering take place from the West to fulfil the prophetic word in Zechariah 8:7-8 and Isaiah 49:12. If one does not acknowledge that this regathering is happening now with Israel, in the Land of Israel, one must be deliberately spiritually blind. Yet the leaders of Palestinian Christianity within the historic churches reject this kind of interpretation. For them, the Zionist movement altogether is a disaster, not only nationally but theologically as well.

On the other hand, within the eyes of Messianic Jews, the entire Zionist movement is a tool in the hands of the Lord, just as the Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar was a tool in His hands, and the Persian King Cyrus, and the Roman Titus and other historical forces. At the same time, one must also acknowledge that even the first-century JBY strongly believed that they were already living in the end times. They expressed this notion very clearly in the New Testament. They expected that the return of Yeshua would be very soon. The apostles Peter and Paul, for example, both expected that the Second Coming would happen in their lifetime. But they did not or could not know that 2,000 years would have to pass.

Jewish Jerusalem

Indeed, in the meantime Israel had to go into exile, and Israel had to return from exile. Additionally, Yeshua's prophecy about Jerusalem being liberated from the rule of the Gentiles had to take place literally (Luke 21:24). It is well known that Jerusalem was not fully under Jewish rule for more than 2,000 years – from the times of the Greeks, the Romans, the Byzantines, the Muslims, the Crusaders, the Mamlukes, the Turkish Ottomans and the British, until June 1967. Only after the Six-Day War in 1967 was Jerusalem reunified and became completely under Jewish control. This is a unique sign of the times.

Also logically, one cannot underestimate or ignore such an historical event. It is obvious that Israel's physical restoration is happening while the Jews are definitely not a perfect nation. Israel is far from being a blameless nation. But God miraculously brings together the 'dry bones' out of their 'grave'. The Nazi films indeed visualised the Jewish bones placed in collective graves. The survivors of those 'dry and dead bones', and others too, were taken into the Promised Land. This is being done by God Himself for a purpose, for a spiritual purpose.

We should take into account that there are many passages within both Old and New Testaments that prophesy worldwide contention over this very issue of Jerusalem in the end-days. Chapters 12 and 14 in the book of Zechariah and a greater fulfilment yet of Luke 21:24 are but two examples.

Gradual process

God's plan for Israel is not fulfilled within 24 hours. It takes an historical process, and we know that God often works through a process. Sometimes, however, it takes a one-time event, such as that which happened with the apostle Paul on his way to Damascus. Paul had an instant personal revelation of Yeshua Himself. But I know from my own personal experience and from that of many other JBY that it often takes a longer time to become a believer in Yeshua. Very often it is an inner struggle, a mental and heartfelt struggle, until we accept Yeshua. Not all of us receive a personal Damascus experience. It may require months or years for this to take place.

I well remember from my own personal history that I first had to struggle intellectually in order to understand that Yeshua is the Messiah; that the New Testament is the continuation of the Old Testament. I needed to understand that I would not lose my Jewish identity when I acknowledged that Yeshua is Messiah; that I would not become an apostate or a traitor to my people. It took time to realise that I would not become a part of the historic Inquisition and the Crusaders, and of the other persecutions of the Jews by the church. Only then, after several years, was I ready to accept Yeshua also in my heart.

And today, Israel is accepting Yeshua step by step, but only intellectually. He is accepted as a Jew, as a great moral luminary, a great teacher and

prophet, but not yet the Messiah, Son of God. Not yet! But even coming this far, accepting Yeshua as a Jew, is a colossal step forward from the international Jewish attitude prior to 1948 and 1967. Almost universally the name of Yeshua in those earlier days would provoke hostility or a curse. Attitudes have been in the process of change now for several decades.

The deep spiritual revelation will happen only after much suffering. That is how I understand it. So in our generation JBY have a broader spiritual perspective than the early believers 2,000 years ago. While today JBY have wider perspectives than the great apostles of the New Testament, they also hold a larger responsibility.

It is interesting to reflect that the Lord used World War I to release the *Land* (then 'Palestine') for the Jewish people; but through World War II came the release of the *people* for the Land. After 2,000 years of dispersion, how is it that these two unique events coincide?

Several messianic movements

Within the Jewish commonwealth there are several modern messianic movements. It is not enough to use the term 'Messianic Jew'. I prefer to say 'Jewish believers in Yeshua', or 'JBY', because it is more accurate. It is problematic to use merely the appellation 'Messianic Jews', because the followers of the late *Lubavitcher*, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, are also Messianic Jews by definition. One must admit that those who follow the *Lubavitcher*, who died in Brooklyn, New York City a decade ago, and attribute to him divinity, etc., are also Messianic Jews. It is a fact that all Jews who believe in the biblical promise of a Messiah are Messianic Jews.

And in the Land one also finds political Messianic Jews – those like *Gush Emunim* (Block of the Faithful), who seek territorial restoration through settlements in Judea and Samaria. Additionally, there are also those Messianic Jews who follow certain rabbis in Israel; false rabbis who claim to be full messiahs, or half messiahs, or three-quarters messiahs, like Uzi Meshulam, Mordechai Eliyahu and the late Bratslaver Rebbe, Nachman of Bratslav, who led the Chasidic movement in Uman (modern-day Ukraine). Moreover, some Israelis even view Ben Gurion as a secular messiah of Israel. They all are by definition Messianic Jews.

Therefore, people always need to clarify precisely in which Messiah

they believe. In Hebrew we often say *Yehudim Talmidei Yeshua* (Jewish disciples of Yeshua) or *Yehudim Hassidei Yeshua* (Jewish followers of Yeshua). In fact this is the scriptural nomenclature. In the New Testament, the term 'disciple(s)' appears about 200 times. Indeed, we are the disciples of Yeshua, because we have only one Teacher and Master.

Spiritual authority of Messianic Jews

Messianic Jews firmly declare that they do not need the formal approval of the historic churches for their legitimacy in these end times. JBY receive their authority directly through the Holy Spirit, just as some believers do today in, say, China. JBY receive their ordination by the Holy Spirit in these prophetic times, in a prophetic way. Occasionally, such a reality may also cause difficulties. Sometimes there are problems because there exist self-appointed teachers, and self-appointed leaders and prophets. But there have always been problems. Even when the Israelites came out from Egypt, there was Korah, and others. Wherever one finds human beings, there are problems! This is true everywhere, in every time. That is reality. However, JBY do assume full spiritual and prophetic authority. I mean, real believers, real servants of the Lord as revealed in the Bible, do have full prophetic, divine authority, to teach and to interpret Scripture – and we talk within a framework of the canonical texts.

Messianic Jewish Yeshua-believers stand on a solid scriptural basis, and for this they definitely must credit the churches. Much credit goes to the churches of the nations that shaped and preserved the canon. The Old Testament was already canonised within the Jewish world, but the New Testament was canonised within the churches, and Messianic Jews accept it without question. The canonical text, together with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is the real life framework of JBY. In that connection there is a sense of indebtedness to the wider (Gentile) church from the JBY for the preservation of the Scriptures and the gospel through the centuries to this present day. Additionally, it is the daily guidance and wisdom of the Holy Spirit that elevates the remnant of JBY.

So, Messianic Yeshua-Jews do come with a prophetic authority in a way that emphasises the Scripture and its fundamentality – not as fundamentalists, but fundamental; not as radical extremists who want to explode the mosques on the Temple Mount. Obviously such ideas are

not on their agenda. The agenda is primarily to understand and to follow the divine words of Yeshua, Son of God and Lord. His teaching is the foundation for everything: in personal life, as well as in national affairs and in universal spirituality. This fundamental approach of JBY poses a theological headache for Palestinian Christians.

Liberation theology of Palestinian Christians

Alongside their theology of replacement of Israel, Palestinian Christians also introduce a liberation theology. This so-called liberation theology is very much based on social and political views taken from Latin America and the Third World. Palestinian Christians justify their liberation theology with isolated concepts like 'justice and only justice', 'love' and 'mercy' in a one-dimensional manner while totally ignoring other dimensions of God, like a God of faithfulness, a sovereign God who keeps His promises, the Lord of judgement, and the King of history. No doubt God is the Lord of love and mercy and justice! No question about it. Nobody denies that.

But God is not simply and solely a God of 'justice and only justice', or merely a God of mercy and love. There are also other attributes of God that are clearly manifest in the Bible. He is also a God of the eternal covenants and of judgement. Indeed, Israel was punished seriously with God's judgement. Israel was not spared. Nobody can say that God is partial, and that He is only the God of the Zionists. So when Palestinian Christians spread made-up slogans such as 'the God of the Old Testament is the God of the Zionists only', should Messianic Jews feel ashamed to call themselves Zionists? Absolutely not! I am not ashamed to call myself a biblical Zionist, because I see that even God is a Zionist, as I understand it from my own Bible.

The prophets of the Bible are Zionists too, because they speak about Zion and the Land of Zion and the return of the Jews to Zion. A key teaching in the New Testament is that the word of the prophets, i.e. Old Testament prophetic teaching, is as a light in a dark place (2 Pet 1:19) – an apt illustration of the present spiritual morass in the whole world. In other words, spiritual light for today is given through understanding and accepting Old Testament prophecy. But the converse is also true: denying the validity of Old Testament prophecy inevitably brings spiritual

darkness and confusion. (When 1 and 2 Peter were written, the New Testament had not been brought together, so Peter had the Old Testament in mind when he, via the Holy Spirit, wrote this passage.)

The whole Land of Zion was promised to Israel, not to the Palestinians. There is no biblical promise for a Palestinian state. And history never witnessed the existence of a Palestinian state. However, as individuals, Arabs should have full human rights. There is no question about that, and this principle was already quite clear in the Old Testament. According to the Torah, the *Ger* (local inhabitant) is the resident in the Land, and he should be treated with full respect and with rights and with all that goes with biblical principles. Just as a reminder, before the current terrorist *intifada*, the Israeli military had left the Palestinian cities and villages, and they enjoyed domestic autonomy. Then they started with suicidal massacres.

Israel never developed an ideology of oppression for the sake of persecution and exploitation of other nations. However, when there are exceptional cases of injustice, they are systematically brought to court. I myself served in the Israeli army for many years, and now my children serve in the IDF, and I know personally that it is an army with the highest standards of morality, even when deviations do occur. The Americans and their allies in Iraq treat no less seriously the wrongdoings of some of their military. In fact, American forces and other 'enlightened armies' around the world, not to mention Muslim troops, would not be as scrupulous as the Israelis.

Palestinian 'martyrdom'

Israeli Messianic Jews completely disagree with Palestinian Christians when they misuse the concept of martyrdom, taken from Scripture and from history, and link it with Arab suicide activities. From both the Bible and church history it is well known what it means to be a martyr. Stephen, the proto-martyr from the book of Acts who gave his life for his faith and witness, was a real martyr. But how can Palestinian Christians say that terrorists are martyrs? How can they employ this terminology in Palestinian Christian writings?

Palestinian Christians even mention Samson from the book of Judges, placing him as a model to justify suicide activities indirectly. Samson, in

their reasoning, is a model because he 'committed martyrdom as a Jewish freedom fighter . . .'. Thus, if Samson is the heroic freedom fighter, then Palestinians can justify their own suicide . . . and, instead of calling their martyrs Samson, they may name them Mohammed, or Ahmed, or Mustafa. This way of thinking is paradoxical indeed when one remembers that Palestinian Christians wish to disregard the Old Testament. Yet in many churches nowadays, people hardly read their Bibles, so they are easily deceived by this kind of propaganda.

Palestinian crusade against Jewish and Christian Zionists

Recently, Palestinian Christians have been waging a massive verbal crusade against Christian Zionists. It is a war of words, a 'terminological' warfare. It is not a virtual game. Words can kill. On 1 April 2004 I attended a conference in Jerusalem, organised by Sabeel, a Palestinian Christian organisation led by the Anglican minister Naim Ateek, already mentioned above as an Arab church leader who does not acknowledge the literal truth of the Bible. Before the conference started, the planners projected only one word on a large screen as an introductory logo. The word was 'Truth', and it appeared in different languages – English, French, German and I think even Hebrew. Thus the word 'Truth' was rotating on the screen, raising the question 'What is truth?' Indeed, what is truth? And where is truth?

The 'truth' of Palestinian Christians condemns Christian Zionists as heretical extremists. Palestinian Christians sharply attack Christian Zionism as if it is one of the biggest sins in these days. According to Palestinian teaching, the Christian supporters of Israel in the West deserve excommunication. An example for this is found in a pastoral letter which was officially published by Munib Younan, the Palestinian Lutheran Bishop in Jerusalem, on 6 January 2003. In his greetings for the New Year, Younan wrote a whole document against Christian Zionism, as follows:

I hereby declare that Christian Zionism is not only a sick theology, but it is a heresy, right along with Arianism and Nestorianism. I believe it is time we named this misinterpretation of Christ and the gospel for what it is. Christian Zionism is anti-justice, anti-peace, anti-reconciliation and the enemy of peace in the Middle East.

This letter is signed with the impressive title of 'Bishop in Jerusalem'. By using the title of 'Bishop of [or in] Jerusalem' he assumes the full spiritual authority of the Bishop in the Holy City. In other words, Younan claims *de facto* to sit on the See of the first Jewish bishop in Jerusalem. In fact, today there are at least seven Gentile bishops in Jerusalem who claim to sit on the Seat of Yaakov (James), the first Messianic Jewish leader in Jerusalem 2,000 years ago. Furthermore, all the denominational bishops in Jerusalem expect modern Messianic Yeshua-Jews to dwell under their wings and accept their authority.

British clergy support Palestinian theology

Palestinian propaganda against biblical Zionism, both Jewish and Christian, is promulgated via the Internet worldwide, aiming to repeat and diffuse the libel that Zionism is nothing but a dangerous heresy. Consequently, some superficial believers already feel guilty and even apologise for being Zionists. That is an absurdity. This is a real spiritual battlefield, where end-time thinking is ridiculed and delegitimised. Within the Palestinian Christian teaching, which 'comes out from Jerusalem', there is no room for end-time thinking, or for end-time warning and end-time education.

In actual fact, from within Scripture, the greatest Zionist of all appears to be none other than the Lord Himself! One clear example of this is that in Isaiah 62, we find in effect that it is the Lord speaking; even though it is through the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, it can *only* be the Lord who says, 'I have set watchmen on thy walls, O Jerusalem [Zion], which shall never hold their peace . . .'

And the same Lord states: 'For Zion's sake I will not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest . . .' (Is 62:1, NKJV). While this has a spiritual connotation (i.e. for the church), it has a distinct earthly application. The Lord goes on to declare: 'Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken, neither shall thy *Land* any more be termed Desolate . . . thy *Land* (shall be called) Beulah, for the Lord delighteth in thee' (Is 62:4 KJV). Zionism, while in fact a divine concept, conceived in the mind of God, has been reduced to a political level by many within the church.

In the UK particularly there are numerous supporters of Palestinian Christian theology. Stephen Sizer, for example, introduces a variety of

devastating misteachings. He rewrites and manipulates history. Sizer even manipulates Holy Scripture. He benefits greatly from the general ignorance of people, particularly ignorance about the Bible. Stephen Sizer regularly distorts biblical Zionism and aims to undermine the unique linkage between Jewish and Christian Zionists. Thus, for example, in his writings he attacks Jews for Jesus, the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America (MJAA) and the British Church's Ministry Among the Jewish People (CMJ), because they are committed to biblical prophecies about Israel and the restoration of Israel. Sizer not only fights against end-time thinking, but fuels the Palestinian spiritual *intifada* against Zionism, against Messianic Jews and against Christian supporters of Israel. I do want to clarify and emphasise that situation as much as possible. We must be aware of and warn against this.

Co-operation between Palestinian Christianity and Islam

I wish to highlight a significant development within Palestinian churches: the specific collaboration between Palestinian Christians and Palestinian Muslims. Substantially, both Palestinian Christians and Palestinian Muslims find a common enemy: Zionism and Israel. Thus, the replacement theology of Palestinian Christians, as it is spread in the Land, now finds a common language with a Muslim replacement theology. Yes, there is also a Muslim replacement theology against Israel, which must be recognised – a Muslim replacement theology which declares that it wishes to replace *all* infidels. First, to substitute the infidels of the *Shabbat*, and then the infidels of the Sunday; and we know who are the 'infidels of the *Shabbat*' and who are the 'infidels of the Sunday'.

There is a pan-Arabist theology against Israel. A large number of Muslim leaders are united by such theological attacks against Israel and Zionism; namely, against the prophetic restoration of Israel. There is, in fact, even a kind of symbiotic relationship between Palestinian Christians and Muslim Arabs. A quote from Mitri Raheb, a Palestinian Lutheran pastor from Bethlehem, shows this: 'I think we have to go further and recognise that Islam too is included in this Jewish-Christian context, theologically and historically. We have things in common with Muslims too, just as Judaism is part of the Christian history, so Islam is part of the history of the effects of Christianity.' This is an example of

the kind of teaching that is coming out of Bethlehem, Christian Bethlehem, today.

Refugees from the Bible

One has to acknowledge that currently we see a creation of a new Palestinian Christian theology based on a new Palestinian Bible, detached very much from the original Scriptures (Jewish Bible). Practically, the interpretation of the Bible by Palestinian Christians is detached from the canonical text, which is interpreted literally by Messianic Jews. Consequently, one observes two polarised groups, i.e. Palestinian Christians and Messianic Jews, who, while living in the same Land and quoting the 'same' Bible, shape very differently their end-time thinking.

Just as not a few Palestinians, including Palestinian Christians, have suffered physically as displaced refugees in the Land (and this isn't the place to deal with the reasons for that), nowadays we also see a new phenomenon: their choice of displacement in the spiritual sphere. In other words, by shaping their own theology, Palestinian Christians push themselves into a new status of refugee – refugees from the Bible. In 1947, all Palestinians, supported by the Arab countries, rejected the UN partition plan and attacked Israel. It could be said that they created the physical problem of the refugees. Nowadays, in fact, Palestinian Christians freely choose to become refugees from Scripture. Obviously, they will not be able to blame anyone else for that. They themselves wish to become refugees from the Bible, because they deliberately and systematically distance themselves from the Jewishness of Scripture.

Evangelical Arab Christians

In order to present a balanced picture, it is also important to underline that not all Arab Christians hold an anti-Israel theology. Praise God, we do know personally some Arab Christians in Israel who are faithful believers in the Bible, and they have had to suffer repeatedly for their stand. But they are not afraid to read and interpret Scripture as small children (as Yeshua demands that every person comes to Him like a child). Indeed, each and every person, Jew and Arab, should come to the Lord as a small child. I can testify personally about Arab Christians in the Land

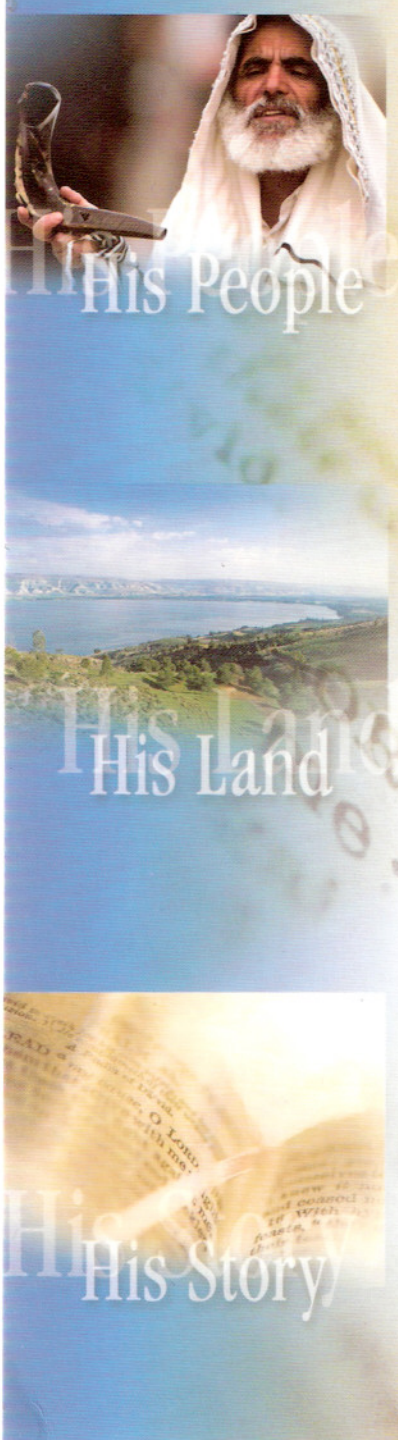
who believe wholeheartedly in Israel's restoration according to prophecy.

For many years I have been involved in the work of the Ebenezer Home in Haifa, Israel, a home for elderly Jewish believers in Yeshua and Arab Christians. I had the privilege of involvement in the appointment of Johnny Khoury, a young Arab believer, who is the current manager of the home. He and I are very good friends, and we have excellent working relations. This mutual respect is based on our relationship to the Bible and our relationship to Yeshua. I can also mention other people, dear Arab Christians who faithfully support the Ebenezer Home, like Samuel Sabbah, who once a week leads the morning devotions at the home, and Rev. Samuel Aweida, the pastor of *Beit Eliyahu* congregation, which is very close to the Ebenezer Home. Rev. Aweida is a young Arab Christian who supports the home and shares the belief in Israel's physical and spiritual restoration. I feel that we are real brothers in the Lord, and this is possible through our belief in Yeshua and in Scripture – without distorting, without rewriting, without manipulating the holy text.

The imminent return of Yeshua

I believe that great times and great events are ahead of us. The contention over the city of Jerusalem, for example, is a thin screen over the battle against the Lord's return. The Lord Himself is behind the declaration in Psalm 132:13–14: This is My rest forever; here will I dwell. *For the Lord has chosen Zion. He has desired it for His habitation.*

We have great responsibilities and may our Lord help us and strengthen us to be ready to fulfil our call for that, because Yeshua is returning soon. Anyone who teaches a different interpretation, that the Second Coming will take place centuries from now, is a false teacher. It is a false teaching to say, 'Yes, He can come in 300, 500 years from now.' The Lord Himself never taught so. On the contrary, even though we are not allowed to set the exact year, day and hour of His return, yet we must all get ready and prepare ourselves day by day, as our Lord and Saviour taught us. He is our Master. We don't know the day. Only the Father knows that. Our responsibility is to be wise, according to the parable of the Lord (Mt 25), like the five clever virgins who had extra oil, and not like the five foolish ones. May Yeshua help us to be ready when He comes. Maranatha! O Lord, come!



'I warmly recommend this book to all with an interest in this region. It opens up new areas and questions for understanding and prayer. It serves as both an introduction for the newcomer and a corrective for the more experienced traveller, challenging assumptions and offering a fresh perspective on Israel... It is a must-read for all involved with the Middle East, whether as friends, commentators or intercessors.'

— from the Foreword by LADY SUSAN SAINSBURY

'I found this book to be very interesting and informative — every Christian should read it.'

— RACHEL ASHLEY-PAIN (*Literary Editor*)

'This considered, masterly collection of essays provides insight and thoughtful opinions about many of the questions asked by Christians and Jews alike regarding the question of Israel. It combines matters of politics with Biblical interpretation; personal experience with scholarly analysis.'

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Ten authors — Christians and Jews — reflect on how we view scripture, history and prophecy. This is not just another book on end-times eschatology, but looks at the roots of international terrorism in the Middle East and Christian approaches to conflict resolution. It includes chapters tracing the growth of messianic fellowships in Israel in the twentieth century, the present challenge of the spiritual intifada, and the plight of Palestinian refugees.

Readily accessible to the ordinary reader, it also has theological depth for church leaders. The authors provide an important and long overdue contribution to dialogue about Israel.

They also seek to promote a better understanding regarding Israel's position in world events, at a time when church bodies in Britain and America increasingly turn to boycott, divestment and sanctions. It is a timely challenge to anti-Israel sentiment in the West.


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