

# Unequivocally Pro-Israeli

By John D. Garr, Ph.D., Th.D.

The rebirth of the nation of Israel in the twentieth century is one of the greatest miracles in human history. Driven by an often incomprehensible passion, millions of Jewish people from around the world have made *aliyah*, Agoing up≅ to reclaim the land central to their corporate legacy from Abraham, the patriarch to whom Athis land≅ was titled by God himself some four millennia ago.

Various Jewish prophets and sages predicted this amazing restoration of a people, a land, and nation. God, himself, promised that following two millennia of their dispersion among the nations of the world, he would once again set his hand to regather the outcasts of the Diaspora into their own land never to be removed again (Amos 9:15). This exodus to *aliyah* from the north, east, south, and west would eclipse the archetypal exodus from Egyptian slavery in both scope and importance (Isaiah 4:6; 11:11-14; Jeremiah 23:7, 8). Israel was to be a renewed nation, born in one day, restored to life and health (Isaiah 66:8). Many of the prophets also declared that the restoration of Israel would be accompanied by an impartation of loving concern and support from Gentile peoples for the restored nation and the renewed people.

AArise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. . . . and the Gentiles shall come to thy light . . . and the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee≅ (Isaiah 60:1, 3, 10). These inspired prophetic words predicted Gentile support for rebuilding the city of Jerusalem and the nation of Israel following the *Galut* (exile) in Babylon. When Cyrus, the Medo-Persian king, commissioned Jewish leaders to return to the land of their ancestors and to rebuild their ancient capital city was; however, his was merely a foretaste of an even greater restoration that was to occur centuries later--the modern-day restoration of the Israeli nation.

While God has regathered the Jewish people to their land, the restoration of the people to the land and the land to the people has received significant support from among the Gentile nations of the world, particularly from the international Christian community. The kind of massive, unequivocal support that the prophets envisioned, however, has not been fully realized. Christian churches have at best vacillated in their stand for the right of self determination of the Jewish people

in the land which was deeded to their ancestors in perpetuity by God himself.

Even moderate support for Jewish causes in recent times has been a radical departure from the norm in Christian circles. Since the late first century of the common era, Christianity has been characterized by Judaeophobia, anti-Judaism, and anti-Semitism. Despite the fact that the Christian patriarch Paul enjoined upon the nations a profound sense of humility and appreciation for being included in God's family tree of salvation (Romans 11:11, 18), Christian triumphalism has been manifest in supersessionism that has often relegated Judaism to the role of a failed, fossil religion and the Jewish people to a subhuman species as Christ killers and mortal enemies of Christian faith. Far from anticipating--much less supporting--the restoration of Israel, much of the church in history and even in the present has reveled in Jewish dispersion as Aevidence≅ of divine rejection.

Despite the lack of cooperation from much of the church, when God began to quicken the spirit of Zionism in Jewish hearts at the end of the nineteenth century, he also began to orchestrate the world political stage to develop his long-awaited prophetic scenario that would make the complete restoration of Israel possible. Contemporaneously, he also initiated a move of the Holy Spirit to prepare the hearts of various Christian individuals and communions to stand with the Jewish people in the quest to restore their nation. As always, God has used what was imperfect at the time to accomplish his purposes and point to the perfect day.

Anyone who has studied pro-Israeli Christianity has noted that most of such support comes from evangelical churches. While mainline churches are characteristically supportive of the international Jewish community in general and of Judaism in particular, they have generally refrained from support of Israel, even championing Palestinian causes. Evangelical churches, on the other hand, have often lagged behind in support of Jewish communities outside the land of Israel while offering endorsement for Israeli statehood and independence. Evangelical support for Jews and Israel has often vacillated, however, depending upon of the relative imminence of the coming of Jesus in their eschatological scenario.

Ulterior motives have undergirded Christian support for Israel from the time when Martin Luther went from being strongly philo-Semitic to being virulently anti-Semitic because Jews did not convert to Protestantism *en masse* in accordance with his own eschatology. Much of dispensationalism is supportive of Israel because it sees rapprochement with the Jewish community

as necessary for the realization of an eschatology that demands the conversion of the Jews as a precondition to the return of Jesus. Additionally, it is sometimes easy for Western evangelical Christians to love Israel while hating Jews who live near them because Israel is on the other side of the world and is mentioned in prophecy.

Then, there are some Christians who have had a love for Israel and the Jews that is founded in their hope of converting individual Jews to Christianity. A virtual big-game hunter mentality dominates their proselytizing thinking and forces them to love the Jews when often they consider them to be unlovable, all in hopes of being able to brag that they have converted a Jew. Fortunately a growing number of Christians has learned to be faithful to the Christian *mitzvah* of bearing witness to their faith while at the same time supporting the international Jewish community and the nation of Israel unconditionally.

How are Israel, the Jewish people, and the church to get beyond these confusing mixed signals of love/hate relationships and be fully liberated into a truly biblical relationship of mutual support? How can Christians come to manifest unequivocal support for the Jewish community and for the nation of Israel based on pure biblical motives? How can Christians arise in this time of prophetic restoration of the land of Israel to become unequivocally pro-Israeli, thereby fulfilling in a spiritual dimension the words of the prophets that Gentiles would come to Israel to light and build up her walls?

A simple marketing axiom teaches that if one is to become unequivocally supportive of a product or an idea, he must be enfranchised with a sense of ownership in that object or concept. We are loyal and supportive of what we own. This profoundly simple concept must be applied in order to enlist unqualified Christian support for Israel. Christians must be enfranchised with a sense of ownership of the vision of Jewish and Israeli restoration. They must come to see themselves as partners in the development of Israel and in the security of the international Jewish community.

How can this be? First, the church around the world must be educated concerning the truth of Christian origins. Christianity is an inherently Jewish faith, birthed in the matrix of Second Temple Judaism. It was founded on faith in the God of the Jews, established and validated by the Bible of the Jews, saved by grace through faith in the Jewish Jesus who is also Lord of the church. Gentiles who have come to faith in the God of the Bible have been grafted into God's family tree of salvation

and covenant relationship and together with the Jewish people have become fellow citizens of the commonwealth of God=s eternal Israel (Romans 11:11; Ephesians 2:11-19).

For far too long, Christianity has defined itself as *Anot Jewish*,≡ while Judaism has defined itself as *Anot Christian*.≡ Both must fully understand that they are sister faiths, springing from the common root of biblical and Second Temple Judaism. Christians, however, have the greater responsibility for establishing means of coming alongside the Jewish community in true fraternal relationship because the church has been the greater agent of division through its overt persecution of the Jewish people for the past eighteen centuries or more.

When all of Christianity has been made aware of the richness of its heritage with and among the Jewish people, one of the largest people groups in the entire world can be enlisted in unequivocal, passionate support of the international Jewish community and the nation of Israel. This support will not be a blanket endorsement of any particular political part, agency, or action in Israel. It will be an affirmation of the fundamental right of the Jewish people to exist as Jews with complete self-determination in the land of Israel, void of any political, economic, or religious coercion, with full entitlement to establish and maintain their nation as they collectively see fit and proper.

When Christians realize that the Jews are to be restored to their land, not because of some Christian eschatological scenario, but because of Jewish entitlement to the land by virtue of God=s covenant with their father Abraham and by virtue of God=s irrevocable commitment to his posterity in perpetuity, Christians by the millions will come to support the Jewish people and their nation without vacillation.

Sigmund Freud noted that *Ahatred for Judaism is at bottom hatred for Christianity*.≡ Christians who are ignorant of the foundations of their faith do not realize that when they hate Jews and are apathetic toward Israel, they are extending the same emotions toward their own Christian faith. It is time that Christians fully define themselves in the context of Judaism, the Jewish community, and the nation of Israel as Jesus and the apostles of earliest Christianity did.

When Christians fully realize that their faith was and remains a branch of ancient Judaism, they gain a profound sense of ownership in the vision of Jewish well being and Israeli security. "Your people will be our people; your God will be our God; and where you die, we will die.≡ These immortal words of a Gentile woman to the Jews must echo from each Christian heart on the planet.

Old prejudices can melt in the heat of face-to-face relationship when one's ancient, long-lost family is embraced. After all, prejudice is nothing more than being down on something you're not up on! When Christians are led out of the ignorance of their heritage by the educational process that has so long been the hallmark of the Jewish community, they will destroy old prejudicial caricatures of Jews and Judaism. They will unequivocally embrace fully the faith of Abraham, who Paul declared is the father of us all (Romans 4:16).

It is profoundly difficult to hate one's own family, even when some members are dysfunctional. When Christians embrace Jews as members of the divine family that was birthed in Abraham, nurtured in the prophets and sages of Israel, and opened to include Gentiles by the Rabbi from Nazareth, familial love overlooks faults and failures of the past and anticipates joy and success in future mutually-supportive relationship.

Racists, bigots, and anti-Semites will always slither from under their rocks, raise their ugly heads, shout their obscenities, and spray the air with their hateful venom. Rather than spend our energies, emotions, and resources counterattacking such evil, we should exercise ourselves to the task of educating the church, bringing it out of the dark ages of prejudice into the light of its biblical relationship with the international Jewish community that will enable all Christians to extend to, Israel and to the Jewish people the loving support that the earliest Christian patriarchs demanded. Though Christians by their own scriptures have no literal entitlement to the land of Israel until the Messianic Age, they must still realize that in spirit Israel is their land and that the Jews are their people. Education is the key. Knowledge is power. In this case, knowledge of Christianity's Judaic heritage is the dynamic antidote to anti-Judaism, anti-Semitism, and anti-Zionism. Understanding the church's Jewish connection will foster the kind of support that will make Christians everywhere unequivocally pro-Israeli.