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ANTISEMITISM TODAY

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ANTI-ZIONISM AND ANTISEMITISM



Lawrence Hirsch
Executive Director of
Celebrate Messiah Australia

Dear friend in the Messiah,

Shalom. I pray the Lord is blessing your life, family, and ministry at the start of this new Jewish year of 5780. In 2020, Celebrate Messiah will be enjoying the celebration of our 25th year of faithful ministry for the Lord among the Jewish people. We are planning a range of events to celebrate this milestone and also hope to see the completion of construction of the Caulfield Messianic Centre.

Antisemitism: The Oldest Hatred

Allow me to open my heart to you. Like many others, I was badly shaken when, on the holiest day of the Jewish calendar, Yom Kippur, a young German man attempted to slaughter a group of Jewish people praying in a synagogue in Halle, Germany. Thank God one congregant thought to lock the front door, and the assailant couldn't get in, but sadly he murdered two people out on the street. This is not an isolated incident and follows the deadly shooting at Passover at a synagogue in Poway, California, and the horrible murders of eleven Jewish people in Pittsburgh, USA on October 27, 2018. These horrific events grabbed our attention and directed it to the growing problem of modern and murderous antisemitism. Antisemitism, called "the oldest hatred," has been around for thousands of years. And today it seems to be intensifying.

Here in Australia, we have also had a growing incidence of antisemitism, and more than offensive graffiti. In a shocking incident that was published around the world, a 12-year-old Jewish boy was forced to kiss the shoes of a Muslim boy and was vilified and ridiculed on social media to the whole school and wider community. The State Government is investigating, and police have charged a 16-year-old over the incident, which also involved death threats to the boy and his mother.

Social commentators, both within and outside of the Jewish community, have many theories about this growing antisemitism, but

they leave out what I believe is the most critical reason of all. **Antisemitism is the devil's invention!** When God called Abram to be the father of His chosen people (Genesis 12:1–3), Satan made the Jewish people the target of his fury. The evil one has tried to annihilate the Jewish people in every age and in endless ways to prevent God from using us as His instruments of redemption through the Jewish Messiah. We know the devil will not prevail, although that does not prevent him from continuing to try.

Sadly, one of his ugliest tactics has been to use the Church to promote the hatred of Jewish people.

Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism

Of course, the picture is not entirely dark. We rejoice in the establishment of modern Israel as a sovereign nation and home for the Jewish people. The State of Israel rose out of the ashes of the Holocaust to provide the Jewish people with a safe haven and a bastion of protection against antisemitism.

Although God's choice of the promised land is ancient and rooted in the Scriptures

(Genesis 15:18–21), the vision for the modern State of Israel is the fruit of the Zionist movement founded in the late 19th century and led by the great Viennese journalist Theodor Herzl. Yet, this love for Zion is not new. It was the cherished hope of both Jews and Christians for centuries because of the prophetic biblical teaching describing the return of the Jewish people to the

land of promise found throughout the Old Testament (Ezekiel 36:22–34).

In fact, some of the earliest and greatest supporters of the Zionist movement were Christian Zionists who took the Bible literally. They fervently believed the Jewish people would return to the land of Israel.

Yet, today we see a rising tide of Christians who do not believe that the foundations of Zionism and the modern State of Israel



DEMEANING: Australian Jewish boy forced to kiss Muslim classmate's shoes, drawing outcry.

established in 1948 are biblical. In light of the growing criticism of Israel among some Christians and the hierarchies of their churches, the question I want us to consider briefly is whether we believe anti-Zionism and, in particular, Christian anti-Zionism, is antisemitic in nature.

Can we equate anti-Zionism with antisemitism?

I would suggest the answer is *sometimes* yes, especially when those opposed to the State of Israel support the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement¹ and groups like Students for Justice in Palestine, which harass and persecute Israeli speakers on university campuses across the globe.

The answer is also *sometimes* no! Some Christians simply do not interpret the Bible as teaching that the land of Israel ultimately belongs to the Jewish people. This is unfortunate, but should not necessarily be equated with antisemitism. However, when criticism of Israel specifically leads to hateful language and actions directed toward Israelis, and Jewish people in general, then I believe the line is crossed.

This is when anti-Zionism becomes antisemitism!

Our Response to Anti-Zionism

Again, we ask the question, Is anti-Zionism antisemitic (especially the Christian version of anti-Zionism)? In order to answer this question, we must begin with a clear definition of biblical Zionism, which is sometimes misunderstood, especially by the Christian anti-Zionists who might be more influenced by culture than by what they read in the Bible.

Biblical Zionism holds that God gave the land of Israel to the Jewish people through an unconditional, irrevocable covenant made between Himself and our forefather, Abraham, as found in many chapters of Genesis (12, 15, 17, 22, 35).

The belief that God gave the land of Israel to the Jewish people is still well-accepted by the majority of Christians, particularly in the United States, with a recent survey of evangelicals sponsored by our partner Chosen People Ministries and Joel Rosenberg. The survey found that more than 80 per cent believed the Abrahamic Covenant continues, and over 80 per cent also see the establishment of the modern State of Israel in 1948 as the fulfillment of prophecy.²

Yet, according to Bob Smietana, who reported on the data discovered by this survey, negativity toward Israel and the hope of Zion seems to be influencing the younger generation of Christians.

*Older American evangelicals love Israel – but many younger evangelicals simply don't care, according to a new survey from Nashville-based LifeWay Research. Three-quarters (77 percent) of evangelicals 65 and older say they support the existence, security and prosperity of Israel. That drops to 58 percent among younger evangelicals, those 18 to 34.*³

There is every reason to believe that similar attitudes prevail in Australia and other Western nations.

Our younger generation was born years after the Holocaust and the founding of the State of Israel, and they do not have the same theological or emotional sympathies as those who were born closer to this time period. They did not

grow up during the days when a much larger coalition of Arab nations tried to destroy Israel or when groups like the Palestinian Liberation Organization murdered Israeli athletes and began terrorist attacks within Israel. It is hard for some to understand that Israel has been so careful to protect the Jewish people within her borders.

This has been difficult for Israeli leaders. There is a mistaken understanding that followers of Yeshua who believe God gave the land of Israel to the Jewish people also support every decision that Israeli politicians make. This is false. All leaders are human, and

capable of mistakes. Israel is not a perfect country! They have made mistakes.

I am hoping that Bible believers will carefully study the Scriptures and conclude that at the heart of *biblical Zionism* is the understanding that God gave the land of Israel to the Jewish people. It is a land to be shared among all her inhabitants since Israel was chosen to bless the nations of the world (Genesis 12:3, Isaiah 44:8). And it is a land and a people to be loved, prayed for (Psalm 122:6), and reached with the gospel message.

The negative spillover of anti-Zionism is impacting the view of many toward the Jewish people within and outside of Israel. When embraced, this critical attitude toward Israel can easily, and unfortunately, lead to antisemitism.

If Anyone Should Oppose All Forms of Antisemitism, It Should Be Us!

Recently, Jeremy Sharon and Sara Rubenstein, writing for the Jerusalem Post, reported on the **European Jewish Congress** held in November 2018. It was sponsored by the Austrian Chancellor, Sebastian Kurz, who initiated the development of a **Catalogue of Policies to Combat Antisemitism**. The 32-year-old chancellor was quoted as saying, "*Antisemitism and anti-Zionism are getting blurred, but they are two sides of the same coin.*"⁴

He recommended the following actions,

The recommendations, which it is hoped will be adopted by the EU and by national governments, include adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's Working Definition of Antisemitism; the appointment by EU countries of a special commissioner for combating antisemitism; a commitment of a percentage of GDP annually to fighting antisemitism; barring antisemites from



September 2018: Campaign in London on the day on which the Labour party NEC was expected to adopt the IHRA definition and examples of antisemitism.

© Mark Kerrison/Alamy Live News

political parties and public office; committing financial and other resources to guaranteeing security for Jewish communities in Europe; making Internet companies liable for antisemitic content on their platforms; and advising companies not to do business with countries or organizations that support antisemitism in any way.⁵

Kurz added,

*Fighting antisemitism deserves much more than simple statements of good will – we need concrete policies and reinforced legislation.*⁶

Oh, how I hope the Church will take the lead on encouraging the above!

How can we possibly reach Jewish people for Jesus without cultivating a love for all Jewish people, including Israelis, and to have a tender heart toward Zion? This is my prayer for you in this New Year, that God would give you the same heart as the Apostle Paul, who wrote in Romans 10:1, “Brethren, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.”

Opposing antisemitism may be a crucial first step in leading Jewish people to open their hearts to Jesus, the Messiah. I pray my people will see that true Christians love the Jewish people (Romans 11:11).

Praying for God’s best for you and your family for the remainder of 2019 and into 2020.



Lawrence

P.S. We would like to remind all our donors that we are so grateful for the generosity of those who have given and will give to the Caulfield Messianic Centre Centurion’s Legacy fundraising campaign. But we must stress that we still need to maintain, and in fact grow, our funds for the ongoing work of Celebrate Messiah missionaries and programs across Australia and also into New Zealand, Far East Russia and Israel. Programs such as Tikkun Olam that distributes food hampers to needy Holocaust survivors, Dom Missi’ee that reaches out to our Russian Jewish community with the Good News of Yeshua, and the many other ways we reach out to our Jewish people. For this reason, we ask that donations to the Caulfield Messianic Centre are over and above your regular giving, so we will be able to reach even more people with Messiah’s message of hope and love.

1 <https://www.influencewatch.org/movement/boycott-divestment-and-sanctions/>.

2 <https://allianceforthepeaceofjerusalem.com/lifeway-survey-full/>.

3 “Support of Israel Wanes Among Younger Evangelicals,” LifeWay Research (blog), December 4, 2017, <https://lifewayresearch.com/2017/12/04/support-of-israel-among-younger-evangelicals/>.

4 <https://www.jpost.com/Diaspora/Antisemitism/Austrian-Kurz-We-cant-undo-history-but-we-can-do-justice-to-our-history-572444> noted on 12.30.18.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.



Operation Good Neighbor. Israeli Commander comforts a Syrian baby. Photo, IDF

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMPASSION AND THE IMAGE OF ISRAEL

Christians are commanded to reach the world for Jesus according to passages such as Matthew 28:19-20 and Acts 1:8. Yet, the motivation for missions – especially to resistant groups, such as the Jewish people and Muslims – often requires an even greater dedication and a broken heart that fuels the passion needed to sustain what can seem like an unsuccessful ministry. Loss of motivation is perfectly understandable, as we are all human.

Yeshua’s example shows He was motivated by compassion.⁷ As Matthew records,

Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.” (Matthew 9:36–38)

What is compassion? It is the feeling you have when you see a baby suffering or a person you love in intolerable pain. It is the sense we have when we see pictures of or we walk into a poverty-stricken area and see children in rags and eating from garbage dumps. It is the unutterable moan that bursts forth from the depth of our soul because of the human condition that leads to tears and sacrificial action.

In Matthew 23:37-39, we read of the Saviour’s compassion and broken heart for His own people, and for all people when He says,

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!”

The Apostle Paul also understood the compassion of the Saviour, and felt the same toward his people. He writes in Romans 9:

“I am telling the truth in Messiah, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Messiah for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.”
(Romans 9:1–3)

This is the kind of compassion that drove the Saviour and should move us, as well.

Christians, throughout the ages, have been capable of great compassion. God has used this desire to accomplish great things, including church planting, serving the poor, building hospitals, providing clean water, and generally improving the lives of the people reached with the message of the Gospel.

Today, ministries promote themselves not only through stirring messages during missions conferences or compelling arguments distributed through blogs and social media, but also through images that elicit compassion. Mission promoters have always understood the power of graphics and images as one of the chief motivational tools to compel Christians to serve the Lord in difficult places. We understand that people serve when their hearts are broken and feel compassion for those in need.

For example, think about the emotion in an appeal to reach Jewish Israelis with the gospel with images of soldiers in the Israeli Defense Forces standing guard at a Gaza checkpoint. Or consider the effect of videos of missiles coming from Gaza and landing in towns like Sderot, perched

on the border of Gaza. And imagine the feelings that flood your soul when you are shown images of small children in Gaza after an Israeli bombing of terrorist tunnels. Who would not be moved by these images?

It is very difficult to think analytically when your heart is broken by the visual stimulation of suffering children. It would be inhuman to think in other terms. In these moments, it is unlikely that anyone would think of fact-checking or of trying to discover the circumstances around the bombing. The images override the facts, even when they might reveal that the bombed buildings were hiding missiles that would cause death to innocent elderly Russian Jews living in Sderot.

Unfortunately, the above illustration is the reality in Israel today. This unbalanced portrayal of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has done much to paint an insidious view of Israelis. Israelis are portrayed as a colonial power that has no regard for human life.

And ironically, this negative image of Jewish Israelis has spilled over to the Jewish people in general, especially in the eyes of next-generation evangelical Christians, triggering a negative view of Israelis and of the Jewish people. Intrinsicly, this is a human and moral problem, but it has also made it more difficult to motivate average Christians to love the Jewish people and Israel, and to share the gospel with them.

⁷ Yeshua is driven by “compassion,” the Greek word, “σπλάγχχνον” *splanchnon*, which refers to an ache in the deepest part of one’s soul. It is used at least ten times in the Gospels to describe the emotion that erupts from inside a person’s soul, causing them to want to care for another person.



This year’s Muchan conference brought together young believers who are the future.

A DARK HISTORY BUT A BRIGHT FUTURE

There is a dark side to church history: a past that is not often revisited. Believers are generally shocked to hear that their theological heroes supported violence against the Jewish people. Consider the following quotations from significant church leaders:

Jerome, Letter 84, 400 AD: “If it is expedient to hate any men and to loath any race, I have a strange dislike to those of the circumcision. For up to the present day they persecute our Lord Jesus Christ in the synagogues of Satan.”⁸

Ambrose of Milan, writing to Emperor Theodosius I, 388 AD: “A report was made by the military Count of the East that a synagogue had been burnt, and that this was done at the instigation of the bishop. You [Theodosius] gave command that the others should be punished, and the synagogue be rebuilt by the bishop himself... Shall, then, a place be made for the unbelief of the Jews out of the spoils of the Church, and shall the patrimony, which by the favour of Christ has been gained for Christians, be transferred to the treasuries of unbelievers?... Shall the Jews write this inscription on the front of their synagogue: ‘The temple of impiety, erected from the plunder of Christians’?”⁹

We are often unaware that church leaders advocated hatred of Jews, the destruction of synagogues, and the violent expulsion of the chosen people from “Christian” society. However, in Jewish circles these stories are well known. In fact, most Jewish people see Christianity through a lens of antisemitism, and they characterise Christianity based on an anti-Jewish Medieval expression that emerged after centuries in Europe. Jewish people today look back and view those who persecuted their ancestors as representatives of the Christian faith.

A recent podcast by Orthodox Rabbi Yaakov Wolbe shared this sentiment: “Jew-hatred is a fundamental, theological principle of the Christian faith.”¹⁰

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THE Centurion's Legacy

The Caulfield Messianic Centre Project



Building Has Begun on the Caulfield Messianic Centre

I can't tell you how excited I am that building has begun on the Caulfield Messianic Centre. It is a dream and a vision that Louise and I have had for 34 years. Yes, one year after coming to faith in Yeshua, Louise and I started to realise that if we were going to reach Jewish people with the Message of the Messiah, we are going to need a congregation that worships Jesus in a culturally relevant and spiritually sensitive way.

Beit HaMashiach has been fulfilling that vision for the last 24 years since Celebrate Messiah started, however, now we are going to have our very own, purpose-built Messianic Centre in the heart of the Jewish community of Caulfield in the middle of the Melbourne Eruv.* Hallelujah!

The demolition of the old buildings has been finished and construction has begun on the first two stages of the project. Praise God that through the sale of property and generous support from people like yourselves, we have raised \$2.2 million dollars. We are now trusting the Lord for His provision of the funds needed for the third and final stage of the Caulfield Messianic Centre. We need a further \$900,000 to complete the project.

Please pray and consider a special donation towards this project at this time.



GROUND-BREAKERS: THE DREAM GOD GAVE TO LOUISE AND LAWRENCE HIRSCH IS BEING REALISED.





TRADITION: THE FORMER CHURCH SANCTUARY IS BEING TRANSFORMED.



VISION: LOOKING OUT TOWARDS THE NEW BUILDING ADDITION.

However, dear faithful, dedicated and sacrificial supporters of Celebrate Messiah, I have to ask you to give to the Caulfield Messianic Centre over and above what you would normally give to the evangelistic mission of Celebrate Messiah. Our mission of “Bringing the Message to the Original Messengers” is the most important calling that God has given us and we need your continued support for this mission to continue.

As you give to Celebrate Messiah and the Caulfield Messianic Centre Project, may the Lord bless you abundantly and may your prayers and generosity rise up before the Lord as a memorial.

*Eruv map showing the Melbourne Jewish Community boundaries

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

This is why your Jewish friend might have a negative response when you share your faith with them!

Fortunately, Rabbi Wolbe is wrong about the true heart of the Christian faith. Still, centuries of anti-Jewish actions by Christians have cast a long shadow and hurt the cause of Jewish evangelism today.

Jewish people generally believe the connection between Christianity and antisemitism is unbreakable. They see this trend continuing, especially among those who are anti-Israel. For the Jewish person today, an anti-Israel perspective merges with the long history of Christian antisemitism and only further supports the negative way most Jewish people view Christianity.

A major debate among modern evangelicals today is whether or not those who held these views of the Jewish people were “real Christians.” Yet, deciding if they were “real” believers is God’s job, and His alone.

The only antidotes to centuries of bad behavior by Christians are love and authenticity of faith. When Jewish people meet Christians who express their love of Israel and the Jewish people because of their love for the Jewish Messiah, then the gospel is elevated, and Jewish people are introduced to the truth about Jesus. Hopefully, they will see there is a big difference between historical Christianity and the true nature of His grace and love toward all people – especially to the Jew first (Romans 1:16)!

We pray and hope Jewish people will meet followers of the Jewish Messiah who love Him, behave as true believers, and love the Jewish people. This is the light that will dispel centuries of darkness.

8 Jerome, “The Letters of St. Jerome,” in St. Jerome: Letters and Select Works, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. W. H. Fremantle, G. Lewis, and W. G. Martley, vol. 6, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1893), 176.

9 James Stevenson and B. J. Kidd, eds., Creeds, Councils, and Controversies: Documents Illustrative of the History of the Church A.D. 337-461 (New York: Seabury Press, 1966), 135.

10 The Jewish History Podcast by Rabbi Yaakov Wolbe, Episode 25: A History of Christian Anti-Semitism Part 1. Starting circa 11:20. <https://rabbiwolbe.com/history-christian-antisemitism-part-one/>.



MIRACLE ANSWER TO PRAYER

During one of our Russian Jewish meetings that Rita was conducting, one of the ladies in the congregation started screaming that her friend Gienia had fainted. As people rushed over to help, others started praying. Rita held her shoulders and prayed she'd come back in the name of Yeshua. The paramedics arrived and checked her pulse and confirmed that her heart had stopped for five minutes. "We believe that the Lord raised her up from death to life," said Rita. "Through our continual prayers and our interceding we believe that the Lord will also raise up Israel from death to life."

As it says in Romans 8:11 "...He who raised Messiah from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit that dwells in you."

COMMON GROUND

Jonathan met Mike at a Jewish event on Simchat Torah, a rabbinic holiday in which Jewish people dance with the Torah. Mike asked him about the meaning of the holiday, and confided that he didn't feel comfortable at these type of events because he didn't look Jewish.

"You look more like an MMA (Mixed Martial Arts) fighter," Jonathan said. Amazingly, Mike confirmed he was one of the few Jewish athletes to have fought in MMA. His mum was Jewish and

his father a Maori Christian. Jonathan related that he also felt like an outsider in the community, as a Jewish believer in Yeshua.

Over the next hour, Jonathan shared his testimony and answered questions about the Messianic Jewish faith. Mike had no idea that there were Jewish believers in Jesus and was keen to continue the conversation. Please pray that this encounter, in which a seed has been planted, will bear much fruit!

CHILD-LIKE FAITH BLOOMS

During the Sukkot holidays, our ministry in Israel held a five-day camp for kids and youth. On the final evening in small groups, some campers gave their lives to Yeshua. It was a blessed time and great to see how God was working in campers and leaders alike.

A mother of a girl attending the camp wrote saying: "Hi, hello! M. said that everyone should urgently sign up for a camp on Passover (April 2020) because there are not many places. It seems you haven't announced it yet, but just in case, I am writing here that M. will go. She is in extraordinary delight at these camps, and the most amazing thing is, that for her, this is not just a fun time, she is seriously imbued with thoughts about God, I am shocked by happiness. She told me by heart yesterday your prayers from the camp, with burning eyes, with aspiration and the words "it was so cool and touching!" I was shocked; I did not expect this from my rather cynical daughter."

NEWS BRIEFS

"We would like to remember Celebrate Messiah in our will, but we are not sure how to go about it."



Giving to Jewish Ministry in Your Will

When you remember Celebrate Messiah in your Will, you become a partner in our life-changing work amongst God's Chosen People world-wide as we await the Messiah's return.

If you would like to speak to a Christian solicitor about including Celebrate Messiah in your Will, please call our office on (03) 9563 5544 for more information.



Community Passover events

Thursday 9 April

St Kilda Town Hall, Melbourne

Saturday 11 April

Northridge Vineyard Church, Sydney

SAVE THE DATE



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