

Session 09 Jewish/Christian History Zionism Propaganda Wars

Jews in Christian lands.

(Information from "Wanderings History of the Jews" by Chaim Potok (1978))

The early church initially was entirely Jewish. It gradually became a minority within a growing Gentile majority - this situation probably explains the content of Paul's epistle to the church at Rome (see series on Romans). After the recognition of Christianity as the religion of the Empire Judaism became seriously disadvantaged, subject to verbal attack by church leaders, followed by various legal restrictions. Jews living in Babylon under Persian rule fared much better, apart from a relatively short period of persecution by a Zoroastrian regime. They completed the enormous Babylonian Talmud by 500 AD. Babylonian Jews fought with the Persian army that conquered Palestine in 624 AD, defeating the "Christian" Byzantine army and occupied Jerusalem. The Byzantines re-conquered the city after a few years and massacred the Jews.

In 636 AD the Muslim Arab armies annihilated the Byzantine army and the Holy Land became Muslim until the Crusader era after 1000 AD. Some Jews remained as a tolerated minority, but the land had been ravished and they were pushed off the residual fertile areas into crowded slums. Most began the great migration to Europe that had begun in the 4th century when, in France, some had accepted the demand for baptism as Christians. Greater numbers migrated from early in the 8th century, when Visigoth rule in Europe came to an end and as Arab armies overran the Middle East and N. Africa. Some migrated to India and China while others continued in the Middle East under Muslim rule. Jews who migrated to Spain soon became Muslim subjects while the others spread out across the area of future France and Germany - Christendom.

The Church warned against contact with Jews but the secular powers did not enforce anti-Jewish decrees and, apart from isolated incidents, there was little outright persecution. By 1000AD a great centre of learning was established in Mainz (south of modern Frankfurt), attracting students from Italy and Spain. The Ashkenazi community was inward looking and developed its own literature and way of life, with little cultural contact with the Christian world, which it regarded as idolatrous. The Christians regarded Jews as the killers of Christ. In 1012 the Jews were expelled from Mainz (but later returned). Jews migrated to England in the wake of the Normans in 1066.

In 1095 Pope Urban II called for Christians "to ... wrest the Holy Sepulchre from the wicked race and subject it ... to Christendom". The following year a vast host of fanatical "Christians" was on the march. Rumours spread that the Jews were assisting Islam. As they moved through Worms, Mainz, and Cologne nearly 7,000 Jews were killed. In 1099 40,000 Crusaders reached Jerusalem. They massacred Jews and then burned the synagogues where people had taken refuge and sold the rest into slavery. No Jews remained in Jerusalem. A second crusade followed in 1147 AD. This time "only" 1000 Jews were killed, the community having bought protection from bishops and nobles. Crusades continued for about 300 years. Mobs would attack Jewish communities, sometimes ending in suicide of family groups, with final pronouncement of the Shema and believing that they were, by their martyrdom, sanctifying the Name of God. By 1400 AD Muslims again ruled in Palestine.

During the 12th century there was widespread and violent anti-Semitism. The first "blood libel" - the belief that Jews killed Christians and used their blood in making the Passover bread - occurred in Norwich in 1144. In 1171 thirty three Jews were burned at the stake following a similar accusation. Thousands died in succeeding centuries on the same charge. In 1190 a mob of crusaders attacked a prosperous Jewish community in York prompting mass suicide.

Jews had been the international merchants but now this role was taken over by Christians. Their recourse was to become money lenders, where there was an opportunity as Christians were debarred by the Church from charging interest. They came to be regarded as "contemptible usurers and demonic plotters against the world of Christendom", even though they were performing a service necessary for society to function. Because of this they came under royal protection in England.

In 1215 the fourth Lateran council ordered Jews (and Muslims) to wear distinctive clothing. This was confirmed by the council of Narbonne in 1227, also stating that that should keep indoors during Holy Week. On the other hand the council of Tours in 1236 prohibited mistreatment of Jews. The Talmud and other Jewish books were burned in Paris 1242 AD. A similar event took place in Rome in 1553.

In Castile in northern "Christian" Spain in 1412 AD 30,000 Jews were made to live apart from Christians. The inquisition was aimed at "Conversos" who were suspected of practicing Judaism secretly. Between 1481 and 1492 AD more than 13,000 were burned to death. Granada, the last Muslim city was conquered in Jan. 1492 and

three months later a decree was made to expel all Jews from Spain - 170,000 left by the end of July, travelling to different parts of Europe, Portugal, N. Africa, and Turkey; tens of thousands were baptized in order to avoid exile, swelling the number of conversos to 300,000. The inquisition continued its gruesome work, extracting confessions by torture and imposing severe punishments as penance, and burning those who refused to confess. Conversos contributed much to the "golden age of Spanish civilization" but this contributed to their unpopularity (envy!). In 1547 both church and state declared that descendants of conversos had tainted blood and they were excluded from guilds and colleges and from certain towns. Genealogies were invented and witnesses bribed to avoid the possible stigma.

The inquisition was not abolished in Spain until 1834.

In the 14th C the black death spread over Europe, killing a third of the population. Who was to blame? The Jews were the obvious culprits and thousands were killed or expelled. Many migrated east to Poland and Lithuania, now speaking Yiddish (mixture of German&Hebrew). By the 16th C those who remained in the west were kept separate and had to wear distinctive clothing. Many lived in ghettos. Luther advocated burning synagogues to show the honour of God and Christianity ... The blood libels, accusations of Christ-killing, demonization, and avarice continued into the next century.

Jewish numbers in Poland grew to about 300,000 by 1648. They were traders and tax collectors for the rulers, chosen as neutrals between ruler and subjects, were protected and prospered as self regulated communities. Poland had annexed Ukraine and this provoked a Cossack uprising in 1648 that led to the deaths of many Jews. Russia supported Ukraine and about a quarter of the Jewish population perished in the conflict. Many migrated west and south from Poland. A major messianic figure appeared raising expectations that were dashed when, under pressure, he converted to Islam.

There was general disillusionment and despondency and the prospect of endless exile. Other messianic pretenders came and went. The migration from Poland was difficult as they met laws restricting residence and work. Jewish life had become socially dislocated, with competition and division. An ecstatic, emotional style of worship broke out in Ukraine and Southern Poland, stimulated by similar things in surrounding Christian sects. The Hasidim movement emerged as a force alongside rabbinic Judaism. They practiced faith healing and exorcism using incantations, amulets, prayers, and the use of the letters of the names of God. The world could be redeemed by joy, ecstasy by keeping the commandments, and so sense the approaching presence of God; dance, sing, and be happy! This was popular.

In 1795 when Poland was partitioned among Austria, Russia, and Germany there were about three quarters of a million Jews living there (of a total of almost four millions). The Hassidim still looked for the Messiah but in the distant future. By the 19th C Rabbis and Rebbes (Hassidic) were joint leaders in the Jewish community. Active messianism had ceased.

In the 17th C Spinoza reinterpreted the Tanach as a human creation. Jews embraced the Enlightenment of secular philosophy and emerged and assimilated into the culture of western Europe, identifying with the non Jewish world and following the contemporary civilization. Hebrew faded and German was used in synagogues. Anti-Semitism still appeared and seemed puzzling. By 1800 the population of world Jewry was about 2.25 millions, including 2m in Europe. Jewish emancipation was by then complete in W. Europe by 1900 but there was a background of anti-Semitism. By 1900 there were 5m Jews in Russia. They were restricted to one area, the Pale, but then evicted from the villages and subjected to military conscription at the age of twelve. Special taxes were imposed.

Many young people embraced socialism and atheism and joined revolutionary groups. They were involved in music and arts and literature. A famine in 1870s led to migration to Europe and USA. Czar Alexander II was assassinated in 1881 and the Jews were blamed. New restrictive laws and government inspired pogroms embittered young Jews.

Pinkster wrote a book that Jews should not wait for the Messiah or look to assimilation as answers - they must have their own land. This was represented by the Hibbat Zion movement (Love of Zion) in Germany and Russia. Others left for Palestine to recover the Land from decay and establish communities there. In 1995 Drefus was sent to Devil's Island, triggering a series of events that led to the 1st Zionist Congress in Basle and

the World Zionist Organization. By 1914 there were 85,000 Jews in the Land and 2m had emigrated from Russia to Britain, Australia, Canada, S.Africa, and the USA. The global total had increased to 13m and by 1939 to 15m.

Zionism - what is it?

- Nevertheless David took the stronghold of **Zion** (that *is*, the City of David), [2 Samuel 5:7](#) (NKJV)
- Look upon Zion, the city of our appointed feasts; Isaiah 33:20 (NKJV)
“Zion shall be ploughed *like* a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, And the mountain of the temple like the bare hills of the forest.” Jeremiah 26:18 (NKJV)
- For the LORD will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD. Isaiah 51:3 (NKJV)
- ... say to Zion, ‘You *are* My people. Isaiah 51:16 (NKJV)
“Up, **Zion!** Escape, you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon.” [Zechariah 2:7](#)
- But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels. Hebrews 12:22 (NKJV)

Zion is: part of a city, the whole city, the Land of Israel, the people of Israel, the place where God chose to meet with His people as a community, and the Heavenly city and its inhabitants.

Zionism is the expression of a deep seated sense of historical and spiritual connection with the Land as homeland, never extinguished during the years of exile and reinforced by experiences in the lands of their dispersal. It is ultimately a spiritual longing but shared by those who claim no personal religious beliefs. The early pioneers were largely from this category. At its core Zionism is the sense of connection between the Land and the people; many of those who remain in the Diaspora nevertheless see it as their spiritual home.

"Blessed *is* the man whose strength *is* in You, Whose heart *is* set on pilgrimage.

As they pass through the Valley of Baca, They make it a spring; The rain also covers it with pools.

They go from strength to strength; *Each one* appears before God in Zion" Psalm 84:5-7 NKJ, & Psalm 137.

The Biblical basis for this was understood by some evangelical Christians long before the event. Puritans, the Wesleys, Wilberforce, Shaftesbury, Bishop JC Ryle, Henry Grattan Guinness, and many others shared this belief.

British Anglicans, assisted by Government, established Christchurch in the Old City of Jerusalem to further this conviction.

The modern Zionist movement was propelled into action by pogroms against the more segregated communities in eastern Europe and Russia and anti-Semitism towards "assimilated" Jews in the west. This was highlighted by the Dreyfus affair in France, resulting in the 1st Zionist Congress in Basle in 1897. Theodore Hertzl predicted the formation of the Jewish state in fifty years' time.

Zionism does not require the absence of non-Jewish people. Many Arabs live in Israel as citizens, hold important positions, and enjoy many benefits. There is no reciprocal situation in "The West Bank" or Gaza. In 1948 there was no general policy to displace the Arab population, although this did happen in the context of the war (as is often the case - tens of millions of people were displaced as a consequence of the 2nd world war and resettled in different places; among them were Jews released from death camps and, e.g. in Poland, driven away when they tried to return to their homes).

850,000 Jews were driven from Muslim lands in the period around 1948, without compensation, and were absorbed into Israel. The plight of the Palestinian Arabs is very sad, but it was not unique or unusual and could have been handled in a similar way by adjacent Arab nations, rather than maintaining them as hostages - weapons to use against Israel).

Israel was commanded to love the stranger (Gentile)

“... **you shall not oppress a stranger**, for you know the heart of a stranger, because you were strangers in the land of

Egypt.” Ex. 23:9 NKJV. “At the end of *every* third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and store *it* up within your gates. And the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who *are* within your gates, may come and eat and be satisfied, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do. Deuteronomy 14:28-29 (NKJV).

The stranger also had responsibilities

“... but the seventh day *is* **the Sabbath** of the LORD your God. *In it* you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, **nor your stranger** who *is* within your gates”. Exodus 20:10 (NKJV), see Nehemiah 13:16, 20-21, 1Sam. 22:7-22.

When Judah returned from exile in Babylon non-Jews opposed them and plotted against them even though the returnees wanted nothing other than to be allowed to live in peace and rebuilt their ruined towns and city - read Nehemiah and Ezra 4-7 for details. Judah's activities had been authorized by the ruling authorities of the day under the overriding sovereignty of God.

Zionism does not require that the state of Israel should currently extend to the Biblical boundaries.

Some enthusiastic "Zionist Christians" believe that it does. We need to recognize two qualifications:

- God is sovereign and will do what He will do in His own time and way, Gen. 15:13-16.
- Full enjoyment of the Covenant promises is contingent on godliness and obedience.

Zionism does require a recognition of the right of the Jewish people to live in the Land as the Jewish people.

This is the core issue and it is inseparable from the absolute right of Israel to defend its citizens against attack. Individual actions by Israel in self defence and wider issues of safe and secure boundaries have to be discussed within this context. The 1967 "green line" was not an agreed international boundary - merely the armistice line - and is indefensible from a security point of view. Walls and fences cause great inconvenience and have had a by-product of loss of territory but they brought to an end the era of "suicide" bombing.

Israel remains undefeated after numerous wars and murderous terrorism over many years. Military threat lies outside the borders of Palestine and Gaza, with militant Islam, particularly in Islamic State and Iran. **The battle line at present is in the area of world opinion that is increasingly hostile to Israel.**

Much reporting ignores context, selects incidents to feed the prevailing narrative, and frequently reverses cause and effect. **Palestinian and Hamas charters are both explicit in denying Israel's right to exist at all** and make statements of intent to "end the occupation" - of the total land area from the river to the sea.

Denial of the right to exist is rare in the media or political statement but the outworking of their demands would effectively have the same outcome. The media and academia contain a preponderance of left wing "liberals". Their worldview informs the opinions of western viewers, readers, and listeners, most of whom do not have the time and/or inclination to search out the truth, or otherwise, of the content and analysis. Truth is, in any case, of only relative importance in the modern post-modern worldview and can be moulded to suit the desired outcome, by selection, distortion, disproportion, or blindness to history and context. Thus **Israel is loudly defamed and delegitimized, increasingly isolated, and subjected to criticism and academic and trade boycotts.** The same people and organizations are silent about States, including Middle Eastern ones, whose human rights abuses are, frankly, appalling.

Sadly, much of the church joins the cacophony, taking its opinion from the secular media, swallowing propaganda as truth, and preferring the opinions of men to the Word of God. Palestine is ranked around 35th of societies that persecute Christians but this fact is largely unknown. Well known "Christian Aid Agencies" take a strong "anti Israel" stance and have (perhaps indirectly and unwittingly) links with terrorist organizations. Evangelical leaders who hold to Replacement Theology participate in "Christ at the Checkpoint" in Bethlehem - an event that is very anti-Israel and ignores the persecution of Christians that has reduced their population in the town from a large majority to a small minority.

Why does it matter?

- **It matters to God and His Son**, John 17:14-19, 19:37-38.
- **Truth matters in a world of expediency where truth is malleable, serving a desired outcome**, John 11:47-50.
- **Where do we get our opinions from - the world or the Word?** Acts 4:19-20, 1John 2:15.
- **Behind world events there is an unseen spiritual battle**, Dan. 7.
- **The major conflict in the Middle East, threatening Europe and the West, has not happened in response to Israel.** The nations are being distracted from the problem they actually share with Israel, the only nation in the region with common values and its only functioning democracy.
- **The Messiah will return to Israel**, Zech. 14:4, Matt. 23:37-39, Acts 1:6-7, 10-11.
- **We need to recognize the signs of the times and make a sane response**, Luke 21:28-36, Rom. 13:11-12, "... of the sons of Issachar who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do ..." 1 Chronicles 12:32.