Israel and Anti-Semitism

Part 1 of 2: Evangelical Attitudes towards Israel
with Darrell Bock, David Brickner, Mitch Glaser
Release Date: September 2014
Welcome to the Table, where we discuss issues of God and culture. And our topic today is Israel and anti-Semitism. And I have with me two of the most significant people – among the most significant people in the Messianic Jewish Movement.

And it's David Brickner of Jews for Jesus, who's with me here in the studio, and Mitch Glaser, who runs Chosen People Ministries. We've got him Skyped in from the lovely island of Manhattan. And thank you all for joining me today.

It's great to be with you.

Of course.

Now let's talk a little bit about each of your ministries. David, I'll start off with you. Talk a little bit about what Jews for Jesus is all about.

Well, Jews for Jesus is a name that people associate with a lot of different things. We have a little plaque on the cornerstone of our headquarters that says, "Established 32 A.D., give or take a year."

But the organization actually began 40 years ago in 1973. And God has blessed us with a direct evangelism focus. We exist to make the messiahship of Jesus an unavoidable issue to our Jewish people worldwide. And so through all kinds of creative means, through direct evangelism, boots on the ground missionaries, we're active in 14 countries around the world.

Our largest branch, actually, right now is Israel – Tel Aviv. We have 24 staff there, and we are, through all kinds of different ways, trying to get Jewish people to reconsider what they think they've heard and have dismissed, and that is that Jesus really is the one of whom the prophet spoke. He is our Messiah – and that we should put our trust in Him for our salvation.

And Chosen People Ministries – talk a little bit about what they do. And it may sound a little bit like an echo. But that's okay – as well as how long they've been around.
**Dr. Mitch Glaser**

Chosen People is 120 years old. And I'm not the founder, just in case anybody is wondering about that. We began because a Hungarian rabbi, Leopold Cohn, got saved on the streets of Lower Manhattan and had a real heart and passion to reach his own Jewish people. And so in 1894, Chosen People began.

And from the beginning, we did a lot of different things. Rabbi Cohn would preach the gospel, start Messianic meetings on Friday night and Saturday morning, and speak to Christians on Sunday. And then Rabbi Cohn would feed poor Jewish immigrants. He set up a medical dispensary in Brooklyn.

At that time, Brooklyn only had probably less than 100,000 Jewish people. Today, it has close to a million Jewish people. So we continue with Rabbi Cohn's vision – although our website is better. And so we do a lot of different things.

We're in, counting the United States, more than a dozen countries, more than a dozen cities all throughout the United States. We do friendship evangelism. We do media-based evangelism, and then we also start what we call "Messianic Centers."

And we have centers of operation in Israel, New York City, London, Germany, Argentina, a bunch of other places. And then we also plant what are called "Messianic Congregations," or Jewish-Christian churches. And we've started dozens of them over the years.

And right now, we're associated around the globe with about 40 Messianic congregations that are being planted by Chosen People, who have Chosen People staff leaders in their pulpits. And so God's doing some great things, and we're seeing some Jewish people really open to the Gospel. And our international headquarters is right here in New York City.

**Dr. Darrell Bock**

And the goal is to make the Messiah known to the Jewish people and to encourage people to let Jewish people know about that. Is that basically correct?
Well, we have a twofold mission. One is to directly evangelize and disciple Jewish people, and then secondly is to encourage and help our Christian brothers and sisters to do the same with their friends and Jewish relatives and loved ones.

Okay. So that gives people a sense of what you all do and your location and things. And our topic today is interesting. I think that the view of Israel has undergone a shift in the time that I've been involved here at Dallas Seminary, in talking about and doing theology.

When I was a student in the 70's and then in the early 80's, the rise of the nation of Israel was seen as kind of fulfillment of Scripture. God was at work. There were interesting things going on in the world, things that hadn't been anticipated, as a result of the nation being established in 1948 – that kind of thing.

And the attitude towards Israel, I think, in the evangelical community was mostly positive. We've seen a shift in the last – what – 15, 20 years. And I'd like each of you to describe how you see that and perhaps why you think that's taken place.

So David, I'll start with you. How is Israel viewed today? And how's that different than what I described was the case, say, in the 80's.

I think it definitely looks different than it did in the 60's and 70's, when there was so much enthusiasm with Israel, with the recapture of Jerusalem. And I think it's become more complex because of the awareness in the Church of the plight of the Palestinians.

And so for many, it's not a Biblically based viewpoint, but rather a social consciousness based tangle, that we really need to help Christians to untangle, and recognize that God loves Arabs and Jews equally, and that the greatest impetus for the Gospel is when Arabs and Jews can say to one another, "I love you in Jesus' name."

And so the problem is that you have these poles of kind of a political Zionism that finds root in certain wings of the Church, and then the very social conscious that is turning into kind of a divestment move, among those Christians who want to kind of punish Israel for the plight of the Palestinians.
And both poles, I think, are wrong and misleading and not where the Church should be – to find a middle ground, where we care for the Palestinian situation and show the kind of love that Christ would have us show, and yet still believe that what God is doing in Israel is of great significance.

Out of the ashes of the Holocaust has risen a modern state, which I believe is God's intention. And there are still many, many Christians who absolutely believe that. And so I don't think that the support for Israel has necessary waned; it's become more complicated.

And we need to help – especially a younger generation – figure that out. And the only way we can do that is carve out a large middle ground, where you can be supportive of Israel and still care for the plight of the Palestinians.

*Dr. Darrell Bock*  
Interesting. Mitch, what's your take on this question?

*Dr. Mitch Glaser*  
Well, I agree with most of what David said, or much of what David said, and we're working along the same lines. I can add to it by suggesting this. I think that our contemporary Church – as both David and I travel around to many churches and speak, and so we have a broad range of experience, which is a real blessing because we get to know a lot of different types of Christians.

And so I generally see a detheologizing within the Church, and I think we're on a descending theological spiral, which is sometimes even reflected in the curriculum at seminaries. And so I see fewer languages, less theology, less Bible, except, of course, at Dallas Seminary.

And what I see is that people are making decisions that they used to make based upon the authority of Scripture – now they're basing their decisions, in some way, following the culture and so on. So, for example, one of the values of the young people is the equanimity of all ethnic peoples, religions, and others – gender issues and so on, which you've wrestled with as well.
And so everybody's the same – Jews, Gentiles. The ground's even at the foot of the cross. There's no difference between what a man can do, what a woman can do, and everything else. And so then trying to get Christians, particularly younger groups, to buy into the fact that for some reason God chose the Jewish people, through the Abrahamic covenant, to be his people for a special purpose that indeed would bless the nations, is getting more difficult.

Because the culture is demanding that we see everybody and treat them all equally. And so it's very difficult to wrestle with the theology of God's selection of people and nations, and then to try and deal with equanimity and treating everybody equally. And so I think that we need to do more by way of Biblical theology to help people make good choices.

And I also think that the alleged decline in support for Israel is overstated. A lot of the churches that I go to are very, very much pro-Israel. But then again, a lot of churches tend to be less – they're not – they're asking deep questions, but they're not solving these questions by understanding the Bible or theology. Because too often, they're following the culture, which the Church does tend to do at various stages.

So I think we need deeper cultural engagement to decipher the difference between cultural and Biblical values. I think we need to increase our understanding of a Biblical theology of Israel and the Jewish people, and I think that once we start doing that, then we have a better basis to talk about some of the more profound issues of reconciliation, of living in peace as one people, and so on. So I think that's just some of what I would add to what David said.

**Dr. Darrell Bock**

Okay. So the situation is actually quite complex. We've got multiple nationalities involved. We've got multiple ways of thinking about religious involvement. I mean people think, "Well, you've got your Jews. You've got your Christians, and you've got your Muslims. And so it's just those three groups."

But, actually, within those groups, you've got subdivisions that make things more complicated. Because you've got Messianic believers on the one hand. You've got Arab and Palestinian believers on another. And so that complicates the mix.
And they're both minorities in the midst of these majorities that surround them – that kind of thing – making the situation on the ground more complex. Well, I don't want to analyze the political situation so much, although I think it's important to have that as the backdrop. Let's step back and say, "Alright. What does the Bible tell us about the place of Israel in the program of God?" Let's just start there and think through.

We've mentioned the covenants. So I think what I'll do is – I'll let each of you explain why you think the Abrahamic Covenant is so important in this discussion. Mitch, I'll start with you, since I led off with David on the previous question. So explain why Israel is important in Scripture, and put us in Genesis 12.

**Dr. Mitch Glaser**

Well, I should begin with a quote from my favorite theologian, Reb Tevye in Fiddler on the Roof. When confronted with the persecution and dispersion of the Jews from Anatevka, where they would all probably move to Brighton Beach and other places like that, Reb Tevye kind of looks up to heaven and says, "Next time, choose somebody else."

And I think that it's a great line. Because election of the Jewish people in Scripture is viewed by Jewish people in terms of obligation, rather than privilege. And the obligation goes all the way back to Genesis 12: 1-3, where God said, "I will bless those who bless you, curse those who curse you. And through you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

And so it's not only that God chose a person, Abraham chose a nation, the Jewish people, that God selected a land, Israel, but he also gave Abraham and the Jewish people a mission, a vocation. And the mission was to be his bridge of blessings to the entire world.

He sealed the covenant in blood in Genesis 17. He passed the covenant along to Isaac and to Jacob. He reiterates the covenant at Mount Sinai, and He also reiterates the covenant in Deuteronomy 7, for example, where he tells the Jewish people that they were not selected because they were the largest in number, but the fewest in number – and again reaffirms the election of the Jewish people based upon his selection through the patriarchs, through the fathers.
And then, of course, jumping all the way to the New Testament, this is reaffirmed by Paul in Romans 9 through 11, but especially in Chapter 11, particularly in Verses 25-29, which speak about the future of the Jewish remnant turning to Jesus. And all Israel will be saved. The remnant will become the nation; the nation will be the remnant, etcetera.

But, again, Paul says that the reason for Israel's election is because of what God did through the patriarchs. And so it's foundational – the Abrahamic Covenant. It predicts the future of the nation. It predicts the future of the land.

And it links the mission of Israel, and it also links the mission of the Gentiles. Because in this age, God said to Abraham, "I'll bless those who bless thee and curse those who curse thee." And so God wants to bless the Gentile nations. If I can make one more point, and then I'll let David run with it.

Dr. Darrell Bock  Okay.

Dr. Mitch Glaser  And that is: "I'll curse those who curse thee." And you know there are two different words for curse. One is to make light, and the other speaks of the judgments upon the Jewish people outlined in Leviticus 26 and 28.

And the whole idea here is that if we make light of God's role and place of the Jewish people, then we might very well be subject to the curses that were outlined for Israel, based upon her disobedience in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28.

And so I think that we need to issue a prophetic warning to the Church. And that is if the Abrahamic Covenant is still in effect, it's not an elective in God's plan any more than anything else God told us to do is an elective.

So unless the Abrahamic Covenant is conditional and is cut off for some reason, either by time or some other purpose, then it stands. The people, the land, the mission, the responsibility of Gentiles to bless rather than curse. And I believe that this is important. It's one of the reasons why we've just done a conference on all of this, and why you and I, Darrell, have edited a book that's going to be coming out, that will be a Biblical theology of Israel and the Jewish people.
Because we need not only the Jewish people, but we need Christians to understand that being a blessing to Israel, whether that blessing – we're not even talking politically. Let's just assume that the greatest blessing is to bring the Gospel to Jewish people. Then that's a responsibility.

That's a duty. Romans 11:11 – God wants the Gentiles to make Jewish people jealous. That's all part of an Abrahamic world view.

**Dr. Darrell Bock** Okay. David, that was – Mitch gave a pretty full look at that.

**David Brickner** He did. Yeah. That's great.

**Dr. Darrell Bock** What do you have to add to that?

**David Brickner** Well, maybe I shouldn't be thinking about giving you more work to do, Darrell.

**Dr. Darrell Bock** Yeah. Okay.

**David Brickner** But it seems to me that what we need is a post-modern understanding of the Doctrine of Election. And that kind of preferential treatment is very politically incorrect, and so that's one of the reasons why people with, as Mitch pointed out, less Biblical sophistication and theology really wrestle with this issue of the Jewish people being called by God, being elect by God.

**Dr. Darrell Bock** So the idea of a people having a special place is kind of a problem for people?

**David Brickner** It is. And yet if we throw off the election of the Jewish people through the Abrahamic Covenant, then we have no basis for understanding the election of individual believers and of the Church – the Body of Christ. That's that old, little poem that was written by somebody in London back in the early part of the 20th century – "How odd of God to choose the Jews."
And I think that's a lot where people are today. "How odd of God to choose the Jews." He goes on to say, "Not so odd as those who choose the Jewish God, yet hate the Jews." So I would say that hatred towards the Jews may not be the best way to describe it, but kind of a simmering under the surface resentment. "What makes you so special?"

And unless we can really explain how Abraham and the Jewish people were not elect for themselves, but for the glory of God and for the blessing of all people, and that he is now the main vehicle, as children of Abraham, for every tribe and tongue and nation to come together and receive the fullness of God's goodness – like Paul says in Ephesians 4: "This is the wisdom of God" that was not known beforehand."

But it is the wisdom of God, and therefore it needs to be embraced by the Body of Christ as the wisdom of God. And then they can recognize all of the implications for that ongoing election. We need to help the Church figure that out today.

**Dr. Darrell Bock**  
So we've got this base in which God has selected out Israel for a special vocation. I like that word. And that vocation involves blessing the world, really, through what it is – the knowledge of God that comes through the revelation of the people of God, being Israel. God is honored in that. We've got those things in place.

And, of course, the next place to go, probably, in discussing the Biblical base of this is to talk about the New Covenant that comes out of the Abrahamic Covenant, to a certain degree, and kind of completes the loop. What's Israel's role in that covenantal promise, where now we've got the new – something called the Renewed Covenant?

I actually don't like that name so much. Because within the offering of the covenant, it makes the point: "This is going to be a covenant not like the one I made on the mountain, not like the one I made in Sinai." So what does the New Covenant gives to this picture? And what's Israel's role in that covenant?

**David Brickner**  
Well, I think, first of all, we need to recognize that the New Covenant, as Jeremiah speaks of it, was given to Israel and Judah. So it has to work for them, before it can work for anybody else.
And that's important then to understand the nature of the relationship of the rest of the Body of Christ to that New Covenant. That comes through being grafted into the rich root of the olive tree, as Paul talks about in Romans 11.

And we're definitely going to come back to that topic. Because that question about whether the Church has taken the place of Israel and Judah is an important question in this conversation. We will come back to that specifically. So go ahead.

But I think that the picture of one new man that Paul paints in Ephesians, as part of this mystery that's now been revealed.

Is something that we have to see as the macro picture of redemption, that includes a place for the Jewish people, and that even in eschatology, which has unfortunately been the only basis for many people's understanding of Jews and Israel.

Eschatology, of course, fills in the picture not just in a future kingdom, but in an eternity, where the New Jerusalem has both the tribes and the apostles on the gates and on the walls, and there's this coming together in a wonderful way of God's purposes that stretch all the way back to Abraham in Genesis 12 and all the way forward to the end of the book in Revelation.

And when we get that macro picture, then we can start to apply it to some of the more pressing issues that we talked about at the very beginning – the Palestinians and Israelis – and Jews in the land, but an unbelief in all of the implications of that, that the Church is really wrestling with today.

Now the New Covenant obviously is about the law being put on the heart of people. It's made to Israel and Judah, as was stated. But what else about the New Covenant is relevant to the conversation, Mitch?

Well, I think we have a beautiful illustration this week of the relevance of the New Covenant. Because it was in the middle of a Passover Seder, which, of course, was a celebration of the Old Covenant.
Because it was during the Seder that we commemorate the shedding of the lamb's blood for the redemption of the first born males. And we even take it further because we tell the whole story of the Exodus, the deliverance of the Jewish people from Egyptian bondage, the sweetness of freedom in the Promised Land.

All these great, great things happened – we've observed during this week of Passover. And it's very fitting that in the middle of a Passover Seder, Jesus breaks what we believe to be the middle piece of matzah, which symbolizes His priesthood and sacrifice, and puts it away, and brings it back, symbolically considering his resurrection. And then He lifts the third cup, the cup after the meal. And we know that that's the cup of redemption.

So though there's scholarly debate about the middle of piece of matzah, to some degree – I have my own strong opinions about it – there's very little discussion on the third cup. That's the one after the meal. It symbolizes, again, the blood of the lamb that was shed.

And in the middle of this Seder, Jesus pours new meaning into the third cup. He raises it, and he says, "This is the blood of the new covenant." And so we understand that this New Covenant, ratified by the shed blood of Jesus, the Jewish Messiah, established in the middle of a Jewish Passover Seder, is an invitation for Gentiles, ultimately, to join in.

And that's not an obscure part of Scripture. This joining in is not only mapped out in Ephesians, it's mapped out in the olive tree illustration in Romans 11 over and over again. And it goes, again, back to the Abrahamic Covenant, where the exclusive choice of Israel was not to lead to exclusivism, but actually to universalism – but the good kind of universalism, the kind of universalism where the Gospel would be for everybody.

The Good News is for everybody – Jews and Gentiles – for all who have been brought near to the promises of God, through the shed blood of the Lamb of God. And so I think that that's very important.

And, of course, Darrell, I know that you want to talk about the law being written on the hearts, and you want us to talk about the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, which – we know we have a good looped ax connection there with Jeremiah, as well as the Book of Hebrews.
But certainly the Jewish people waited – and, again, this is tied, again, to the Jewish festival. So they waited after Passover, counted down 50 days. Didn't they?

*Dr. Darrell Bock* Uh-huh.

*Dr. Mitch Glaser* And then on the 50th day, coincidentally, God chose the Feast of Weeks, Shavuot or Pentecost, as the day when he would send his Holy Spirit to fulfill this promise. And so you have the New Covenant, the first part of it at least, revealed in the middle of the Seder, and then you have the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Jewish people – you have that as part of Shavuot, the fulfillment of this great promise.

And so I believe that Christians should try and understand their Jewish roots and Jewish heritage, and what it means to be grafted in. So it doesn't mean that Gentiles have replaced; it means that Gentiles are included, as God always promised.

So the sharing of the blood of redemption, of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, of the law being written upon our hearts – this is not something that one or the other has. But in Christ, we all have it.

*Dr. Darrell Bock* Now it's important for me just to note in passing, for those who are listening, that we are taping this during the week of Passover. And so that's Mitch's elusion, even though you'll be hearing this somewhat later. And that imagery is important.

I'd like to make a Christological point, as an aside here that needs to be observed as well. And that is there's something about the authority of Jesus wrapped up in His taking a feast that has been commanded in the Torah and filling it with fresh symbolism. Who has the right to take something that's written in Exodus and give it new meaning? He's got to be pretty important to be able to do that.

*David Brickner* A prophet greater than Moses.
Dr. Darrell Bock: A prophet greater than Moses. So even the choice of taking this core symbolism and adjusting it in light of what God is now doing through Jesus – to take one picture of salvation, if you will, and turn it into a mirrored, but separate picture of salvation at the same time says an awful lot about who Jesus is.

And, of course, the resurrection is God's vote in the dispute about whether Jesus has the right to do that or not. So this is a very, very important part of that scene as well. Mitch, you look like you're ready to chime in at any point here. Go ahead.

Dr. Mitch Glaser: You know me well. I don't think we should lose the hermeneutical factor here in this discussion. I was with a brother, a Korean brother, who was raised as someone who believed that when you looked at Israel in the Old and New Testament, it always referred to the Church. We call that Replacement Theology, Supersessionism.

And obviously there's a continuum of these doctrines and various interpretations. And he said to me, "I was so ear bent to reading the Bible this way, that I didn't know there was any other way to read the Bible." And so he was a replacement theologian from birth.

And then eventually what happened was – he was reading the Bible one day, and the Holy Spirit challenged him. Of course, he's a Presbyterian, so I don't know how that really happened. Can that happen with Presbyterians? Maybe.

Dr. Darrell Bock: Yeah. I think so.

Dr. Mitch Glaser: So he was a very conservative guy, and the Lord just said to him, "Let's try and take Israel as Israel, as the Jewish people." And he said once he put that together, his whole understanding of Scripture was transformed.

Let's face it. For many, many, many years, the Church has interpreted itself and read itself into the history of Israel, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. And so what we're talking about is something not only hermeneutical, but almost akin to a world view.
And so the challenge of asking our brothers and sisters in the broader Church to think about Israel's role actually means that they have to reinvestigate and rethink their basic hermeneutics—what words mean. How literal should Scripture really be taken?

And I believe that that's a very important issue. And I believe that the hermeneutics of the situation needs to be fully addressed.

*Dr. Darrell Bock*: Yeah. And I'm going to ask a question that's really going to put this in focus in just a second. But David, do you have any observations as well, in terms of both the Christology and the hermeneutical question that rotates around events like the Last Supper?

*David Brickner*: Absolutely. And it goes to the very character of God. What do we believe about God? Is he a promise keeping God?

*David Brickner*: So it's God's faithfulness we're talking about?

*David Brickner*: Absolutely. So through his keeping of his faithful promises to Israel, He has been glorified through history. And for a church, through hermeneutic or self-dealing, to deny that to God—that's the first sin. The sin isn't against the Jewish people; the sin is against God Himself, who staked his reputation on the perpetuity of the Jewish people, who gave them precious promises and said, "Forever," not just for a limited time.

And it almost makes God out to be a bigamist. Because he marries his people, Israel. He says, "You're my bride." And then the Church says, "Oh, but He wasn't really talking about you. He was talking about us."

And that kind of hermeneutic just actually ultimately undermines our confidence in the character of God and His ability to keep His promises.