

Israel at War

Our Call to Pray for Peace

By Dave Butts

It is no surprise that Israel is a source of division and contention, both in the world and in the Church. It has always been so.

So, what are the reasons?

One could look to the unique geographic place of the nation, a bridge of land between warring empires for millennia. Or one could look to the exclusivist monotheism of the Jewish faith that set it apart through the ages.

Modern analysts can perhaps look to the deep-seated antagonism between Jew and Arab as an outgrowth of tribal hatreds born centuries ago, even reaching back to the children of the Patriarch Abraham. Christianity's emergence from the root of Israel has led to a confusion of relationship that has shifted like sand through the years, ranging from love and respect to outright persecution.

Though all these points are true to some extent, I believe there is a spiritual source—literally, a demonic one that underlies the controversy.

Supernatural Origin

From the beginning, the great adversary Satan has hated the Jewish people. They were the ones chosen by God through which the purposes of God were to be carried out on planet Earth. It was through the Jewish people that God's redemptive plan for mankind was to be enacted, thereby assuring Satan of defeat.

The persistence and ferocity of anti-Semitism through the centuries can only be explained by a supernatural force. Satan has tried to destroy the out-working of God's grace by destroying the people God would use to demonstrate His greatest grace.

From Haman to Hitler might be a good, if chilling, title to a book about the deadly nature of anti-Semitism. In the biblical days of Esther and her uncle Mordecai, the Jews faced an enemy in the person of a Babylonian official named Haman whose desire was to have all the Jews killed. Though Haman perished, the spirit behind his deadly schemes did not. History records again and again how hatred against the Jewish people erupted into violence and persecution.

For instance, the efforts of Hitler and his Nazis to eliminate all European Jews during the Holocaust was such a monstrous act that it is hard to imagine such large-scale murder apart from demonic involvement. Certainly, Christians who pray for Israel will want to deal significantly with issues of spiritual warfare on behalf of the Jewish people.

Biblical Admonition to Pray

This may be hard for some to believe, but even praying for Israel can be a point of controversy for followers of Christ. The significance of the existence of the modern State of Israel is a point hotly disputed among Christians. I am guessing that the majority of those reading this article believe the founding of the State of Israel in 1948 was an astonishing fulfillment of biblical prophecy and that events surrounding Israel are key to understanding the Last Days.

That is certainly my view! But I have many godly friends who hold firmly to the Word of God yet believe differently.

I am not here to convince people to my view, but to present effective ways to pray for Israel. Those who do not see modern

Israel as a fulfillment of prophecy may well not have the sense of urgency to pray for Israel. But my encouragement to them is still to pray. At the very least, all Christians can join in obedience to the biblical admonition to pray for the peace of Jerusalem according to Psalm 122:6:

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May those who love you be secure."

Peace in Times of Trouble

What does it mean to pray for the peace of Jerusalem? First, I suggest that a prayer for the peace of Jerusalem is not confined to the city alone but includes the whole nation of Israel. In Old Testament times, the capital city of Jerusalem represented the entire nation. When times of trouble came, much of the nation came inside the walls of Jerusalem for protection.

So, then, how do we pray for Jerusalem (Israel)?

Certainly, there is the aspect of protection from war, violence, and terrorism that we all desire for Israel. While it appears prophetically that there will come a time when God's hand of protection is withdrawn for a time from Jerusalem, until that time we are to pray for God's peace.

This aspect of peace involves a cessation of hostility and attack. If, despite our prayers, it appears that violence still occurs, we can only imagine to what extent there would be unbridled violence without our prayers.

In one way, Jerusalem will never completely know peace until the Prince of Peace comes (again) to reign. There is, however, a peace that comes to the human heart when Jesus is made Lord of that heart and life. I believe it essential that we pray for the peace of Christ to come into many hearts in Israel. It is this peace that will comfort and endure, even through times of great trial and tribulation.

On the first Sunday in October of each year, many in the Church have come together for the International Day of Prayer for the Peace of Jerusalem. If your church has not become involved in this prayer event, please check out their website at daytopray.com. Praying for the peace of Jerusalem is so much more than a one-day event, but this day of prayer can help ignite your prayers for the rest of the year on Israel's behalf.

Effective Intercession for Israel

With Israel playing a central role politically, religiously, and prophetically in the Middle East, much effective intercession needs to be made on her behalf. My friend Sandra Teplinsky, in her book *Why Care About Israel?* gives us some ways to pray for Israel:

- Blessing and strengthening of those in true spiritual authority
- Outpouring of grace leading to repentance for unsaved Jews and Arabs
- Revival and maturity in the Israeli "body of Messiah"
- Blessing and wisdom for government authorities and others in leadership
- God's sending and sustaining of laborers into Israeli harvest fields, opening doors for Messianic Jewish Aliyah (return)
- Sending of resources to the Messianic community in Jerusalem and the rest of Israel by believers in the nations
- Jerusalem's (Israel's) protection from enemy attack, physical and spiritual
- Jerusalem's (Israel's) enemies to be delivered from darkness into light
- Your nation's blessing of Jerusalem and Israel
- The nations' recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's eternal capital city

- Protection from the spirit of antichrist
- The fulfillment of Jerusalem's redemptive purpose on earth as the "City of the Great King," a city of peace that blesses the nations
- The gift of intercessory tears to be shed on her behalf until these things come to pass.

I love the balance of these intercessory pleas on behalf of Israel. There is no attempt to accept everything that the modern State of Israel does as an act endorsed by God. Israel is a secular state that has made many mistakes.

Nor is there anything that demonizes the opponents of Israel. Instead, in prayer, we choose to align ourselves with God's redemptive and prophetic purposes to use Israel as an important part of what God is doing and is going to do on Earth.

For His Glory

Praying for Israel is ultimately about asking God to use this tiny nation to bring Him glory—and to use the Jewish people to bring about His purposes as He has so many times in the past. God uses our prayer for Israel to advance His Kingdom and to bring honor to His Son, Israel's largely unrecognized Messiah.

Because your prayers for Israel are such a critical part of God's end-time purposes, these prayers will become more intense as the time approaches. I believe the day-and-night prayer movement that began several years ago and continues to intensify is a sign of the approaching end of days. This 24-7 prayer movement is an act of obedience and fulfillment of the command of Scriptures:

You who call on the Lord, give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth (Isa. 62:6–7).

The ten days of day and night prayer in Jerusalem before Pentecost launched the Church in her mission more than 2,000 years ago. In the early 1700s, the 100-year, day-and-night prayer meeting of the Moravians began the modern missions movement.

I believe the current day-and-night prayer movement will usher in the fulfillment of the mission of the Church, the glorious appearing of Christ. Let's pray for the soon return and reign of the Prince of Peace!

A Prayer of Hope

God of Israel, how amazed I am at the way You have brought Your people back into the land of promise. In our day we have watched with our own eyes as You have restored Jerusalem to Your people Israel and, against all odds, have brought into being a nation that many have said could never exist again.

Now Lord, pour out that spirit of grace and supplication upon Jerusalem (Zech. 12:10). May Jesus be recognized as Messiah by His own people. Bring peace to Jerusalem as the Prince of Peace is enthroned upon the hearts of the Jewish people and all who dwell in the land.

DAVE BUTTS was the president of Harvest Prayer Ministries and the author of many books on prayer. He was also the chairperson of America's National Prayer Committee. Dave and his wife Kim led many prayer journeys to Israel before he passed away in 2022. This article is excerpted from his book *Prayer and the End of Days*, published in 2013.