



David Zadok,
“A Messianic Jewish Response to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,”
Borough Park Symposium 4,
[http://www.chosenpeople.com/symposium/papers2014/
Topic_3_David_Zadok_Main_Paper.pdf](http://www.chosenpeople.com/symposium/papers2014/Topic_3_David_Zadok_Main_Paper.pdf).
February, 2014.

Sandra Teplinsky,
“Response to David Zadok on ‘A Messianic
Jewish Response to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,’”
Borough Park Symposium 4,
[http://www.chosenpeople.com/symposium/papers2014/
Topic_3_Sandra_Teplinsky_Response_Paper.pdf](http://www.chosenpeople.com/symposium/papers2014/Topic_3_Sandra_Teplinsky_Response_Paper.pdf).
February, 2014.

Judith Rood,
“The Messianic Movement and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict:
Understanding the Evangelical Palestinian Resistance,”
Borough Park Symposium 4,
[http://www.chosenpeople.com/symposium/papers2014/Topic_3_Judith_
Rood_Response_Paper.pdf](http://www.chosenpeople.com/symposium/papers2014/Topic_3_Judith_Rood_Response_Paper.pdf).
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INTRODUCTION

From February 16-18, 2015, the fourth gathering of the Borough Park Symposium met in New York City. Messianic Jewish leaders and scholars from around the world came together to discuss and present Messianic Jewish perspectives on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. From the symposium organizers’ own description the goal was to cover, “biblical and theological perspectives on the modern state of Israel; relationships between Israel and its neighbors, and

between Jewish and Arab Yeshua-believers,” as well as how to, “frame the way we speak about Israel and the Middle East within the Messianic Jewish community and to the broader Christian world.” The results were not nearly as monolithic as one might expect. In this short review we would like to summarize and reflect on one of the Symposium’s segments which had contributors who held some of the more divergent perspectives.

The topic of this segment was, “A Messianic Jewish Response to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict” and its primary contributor was David Zadok, pastor of Grace and Truth Congregation in Israel and the Field Director of Christian Witness to Israel, HaGefen Publishing. Responding to Zadok’s presentation were author, minister, and speaker Sandra Teplinsky, president and founder of Light of Zion, a Messianic outreach to Israel and the Church based in California and Jerusalem, and Dr. Judith Rood, Professor of Middle East Studies at Biola University in La Mirada, California.

SUMMARY AND EVALUATION

In his paper, David Zadok focuses primarily on the biblical relationship between the people of Israel and the Land of Israel. He highlights the overarching plan of God to redeem and restore mankind as He deals with the problem of sin and enmity, tracing the Land promises throughout the biblical narrative. Using an analogy similar to Messiah’s statement that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath, Zadok suggests that the Land was made for man and not man for the Land. This does not negate or downplay the importance of the Land in the outworking of God’s Kingdom plan, but rather helps place it in its proper context. That God is and always has been more concerned with the redemption of people from every tribe, nation, and tongue than He has been with the Land is the paradigm through which Zadok suggests Messianic Jews ought to view the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

As Zadok applies this paradigm he mentions the vastly different hermeneutics employed by both Messianic Jewish Israelis and Palestinian Christians, briefly touching on their impact.

He acknowledges the tough questions that both sides must ask about Palestinian suffering and threats to Israel’s security, and concludes with suggested ways forward for Messianic Jews. He exhorts Messianic Jews to listen to and try to understand their Palestinian Christian brothers; acknowledge and at times be critical of Israel’s misuse of military power; support Israel’s right to protect herself from Islamic terrorism; and remember that the battle is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers. Thus, Messianic Jews must continue to share the Gospel in Israel with Jew and Arab alike, and allow their views to be shaped by the Word of God and not by nationalistic identity.

Sandra Teplinsky offers her paper as a supplement to Zadok’s. She provides some deeper exegetical insights on certain passages highlighted by Zadok, including Hebrews 11:10 and Genesis 3:15. Building upon Zadok’s mention of hermeneutics, Teplinsky expounds upon the deleterious effects that Liberation Theology has had on some Palestinian Christians as well as their Western supporters. She summarizes their view as stating, “the Bible has no meaning in and of itself. Instead, the meaning of Scripture (especially regarding Israel) is said to derive from subjective interaction between reader and text A critical question is how much subjectivity ought to be considered within the bounds of fair discussion in an honest search for biblical truth,” (Teplinsky, 2). A key conclusion for her is that without being on the same page in interpreting biblical truth, there is no chance of reconciliation based on any truth.

Teplinsky addresses the historical, political, and legal issues in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, with specific responses to mainstream Palestinian culture. She does a masterful job tracing the legal rights that Israel has to the

Land in accordance with International Law, and exposes Israel's dissenters as employing lawfare—"the manipulation of traditional Western law so as to undermine the principles on which that law is based, and thereby achieve otherwise unattainable, extremist political goals," (Teplinsky, 3)—to delegitimize Israel. She concludes with a call for Messianic Jew's and Palestinian Christian's to take their personal hurt, pride, ill feelings toward Israelis and Palestinian's to the cross; that this will open the floodgates of forgiveness, and ultimately hearken the return of the King.

With an expertise in Arab Studies, Judith Rood centers on understanding the "Evangelical Palestinian Resistance." She begins by giving a sweeping and precise overview of how the political situation in the Arab world has been shaped through the twentieth century and suggests the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict resulted from Western influence in the region post-WWII and post-Cold War. As a result the rise of radical Islamist regimes attempting to reverse those results and expunge Western influence from what were once Islamic lands, the "Palestinian Resistance" is viewed as the only viable option "for some evangelical Palestinians to express their political will, to have some sense of participating in their national rejection of the legitimacy of Israel," (Rood, 2).

This unlikely marriage between a group of non-violent evangelicals and violent resistance organizations has been forged through the introduction of Liberation Theology into the Palestinian Christian narrative, has thrived through Sabeel, an ecumenical organization spear-headed by Anglican minister Naim Ateek, and has found its most prominent expression in the "Christ at the Checkpoint" conference series. Rood provides a pointed critique of the Palestinian *Kairos Document* and concludes

that its underlying philosophy, "makes it an impossible basis for reconciliation between Messianic Jews and Palestinian Christians. Like the Hamas Charter, the Palestinian Christian document articulates an eschatological rejection of the Jewish state," (Rood, 4).

With such divergent historical narratives at play, even among Messianic Jews and Palestinian Christians, Rood suggests a way for the two groups to seek reconciliation in the absence of peace. She points to the joint work of Lisa Loden and Salim Munayer, *Through My Enemies Eyes: Envisioning Reconciliation in Israel-Palestine*, as a template to follow. This template sees the two authors coming together to hear, understand, and respect each side's historical view of events as well as biblical hermeneutic, accepting each other's presence while rejecting voices that call for the destruction of either, and meeting each other at the foot of the Cross.

Such an attempt at reconciliation in the absence of peace and in the absence of agreement on historical narrative is respectable and admirable especially for followers of Messiah. However, it is not an easy undertaking, even for followers of Messiah. This is emblematic in what is perhaps the most stirring portion of Rood's paper. Her epilogue relays the story of Palestinian Christian leader, Sami Awad, who spent the night in a children's bunk during a visit to Auschwitz. His view of Israel was greatly impacted by the experience as he stared at "drawings these children had left behind, pictures of children playing drawn by children who would never play again," (Rood, 8). He suddenly understood the impact that the Holocaust has had in shaping Israel, her desire and drive to exist and to never again be under the thumb of foreign rulers. As he shared this testimony at the "Christ at the Checkpoint" conference in 2010, he passionately called

for Palestinian Christians to lead the way in seeking non-violent peace with Israel, with an understanding of Jewish history, and the fear and pain of the past. He declared, “We must be a voice of truth in suffering, on behalf of all people, including the Jewish people who have not had the opportunity to heal,” (Rood, 9). His words were a glimmer of hope. Sadly, Rood shares that since he uttered the words in 2010 he has distanced himself from the comments. She believes because of pressure from the “Resistance.”

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The three authors each took different approaches in examining what the Messianic Jewish response to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict ought to be. Zadok appealed primarily to Scripture understood and applied; Teplinsky reinforced Zadok’s view and added the importance of the legal legitimacy of Israel’s right to the Land in the face of radical “lawfare” perpetuated by extremists; and, Rood brought a greater understanding of how both Israeli and Palestinian historical narratives have impacted the current situation. In proposing pathways to reconciliation, Teplinsky and Rood hold clearly opposite views on the need for mutual agreement on biblical and historical truth. Despite this, what stood out the most to this reviewer is how each contributor emphasized the need for the centrality of the Cross in any attempt at reconciliation or peace. Even when discussing a conflict so complex, with waters muddied by outside influences, disagreements on truth, and polarized historical narratives—the Cross remains the only place where reconciliation can be found.