

# WHY STILL CARE ABOUT ISRAEL?

*The Sanctity of Covenant, Moral Justice  
and Prophetic Blessing*

**SANDRA TEPLINSKY**



**Chosen**

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*This book is offered to the Lord and His people,  
with gratitude beyond words for His mercy and grace,  
the loving support and invaluable help  
of my husband, Kerry, and daughter, Tasha,  
the scholarly input of Dr. William J. Bjoraker  
and editing expertise of Natasha Sperling.*



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## Foreword

Sandy Teplinsky has navigated her way through a biblical and theological and political field of land mines, and she has done it with grace, with sensitivity, with compassion, with courage and with exegetical acumen, thereby helping to navigate the way for all of us. And it was not an easy task.

How can you call the Church to care for Israel without being accused of neglecting the Palestinians? How can you claim a special calling on the Jewish people without being accused of favoritism and even advocating ethnic/racial superiority? How can you have a deeply spiritual approach to the Scriptures while still maintaining the importance of a physical plot of land? How can you develop a Jesus-centered theology while claiming that the Church cannot be whole without a restored Israel?

I believe that Sandy is uniquely qualified for the task at hand. First, more than anything, she is a lover of God, desiring to please Him more than side with a people or a cause. Second, she is a woman of prayer and compassion, and she is just as moved by the plight of a suffering Muslim child in Gaza as she is by the plight of a suffering Jewish child in Jerusalem. Third, as a trained attorney, she is meticulous in her research and understands proper legal (and logical) argumentation. Fourth, as

a careful student of the Scriptures and history, she knows how to avoid common interpretive errors by using reliable scholarly sources. Fifth, as a Messianic Jewish woman who lives part time in Israel with her Jewish husband, Kerry, she loves and supports the Jewish state without idealizing it (or demonizing Palestinians), as some sincere Christian Zionists have sometimes done.

I have watched Sandy work on this book for many years—burdened to be fair to all, burdened to keep pointing readers to Yeshua (Jesus), burdened to be meticulously accurate in all she writes, burdened to convey God’s heart for Israel—and I wholeheartedly commend this book to you.

If you will read it with a prayerful, open mind—and a healthy dose of courage!—it might just change your life.

Michael L. Brown, Ph.D., president,  
FIRE School of Ministry, Concord, North Carolina;  
author, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus*

## Why Still Care about Israel?

A vast army descends upon a desert wilderness in the ancient Middle East, signaling that life is about to change forever. Outside the camp a stalwart, lone warrior paces in resolute silence. Normally the man is seen presiding over a feisty multitude. But today his eyes lock on to the horizon ahead.

Suddenly, an imposing figure with sword in hand materializes before him. Startled, the seasoned leader demands to know: “Are you for us or against us?”

None other than the voice of God replies. “No! But as Commander of the Lord’s army I come!” The figure in human form is a manifestation of Yahweh Himself.

Despite Joshua’s personal history with the Almighty, his heart skips a beat. The man falls to the ground on his face, humbled. The right question is not whether God is for the Israelites or their adversaries. The right question—the one he did not ask—is, “*Who are You?*”

It is much the same for us today. Discussion about Israel in the 21st century often starts by asking, not unlike Joshua, if God is for or against the Jewish state—or the Palestinians, Arabs or Muslims. But He is not for or against nations or people groups as we tend to think. His heart, His character and His ways are different from ours. The first question must be, “Who is our God, this sovereign and supreme Creator of the universe?” From there we discover that Israel—and often the ongoing contention against her—is ultimately about *Him*.

And so, bowed low, Joshua inquires, “What does my Lord say to His servant?”

May I ask, do you want to know what the Lord is saying to you, His servant, in today’s fast-changing world? Do you pray that His will be done, and His Kingdom come? Do you want to know Him better in the process? If so, then a Bible-based and factually honest understanding of Israel is essential.

Through Israel the Creator is revealing the passions of His heart for all humankind—including you—personally and intimately. In the process, He is testing Jews and Gentiles alike. He is refining the Church, shaking civilizations and establishing His Kingdom on earth. He is doing it with extravagant love—and He invites you to come, see and take part.

## **Who Will Benefit from This Book?**

This book was written mainly for three types of readers:

- Bible believers who are interested in Israel and want to learn more, from a Messianic Jewish (Jewish Christian) Israeli perspective;
- Christians who already care much for Israel but want to stay current on issues or gain deeper insight; and

- Christians who question or doubt that God still has prophetic plans for Israel.

If you consider yourself in this last group, may I encourage you in a spirit of Messiah-like love to open your heart and mind to a new perspective? If you have never seriously studied the presuppositions of your beliefs, if you have not carefully listened to an Israeli point of view or if you've formed an opinion mostly from hearsay, could it be time to ask God if He has something fresh to say to you?

In addition to the three groups of readers described above, I have written to a fourth: *non-Christians* who are puzzled or troubled by the controversy and quandary of Israel—and are willing to view the matter through the lens of Scripture.

The book in your hands is a significantly revised update of *Why Care about Israel?* written in 2003. At that time, Israel found herself in the throes of a deadly Palestinian *intifada* (“uprising”). Practically weekly, mass suicide bombings besieged the country. Jewish blood splattered in streets, schools, shops, buses—even religious gatherings—while the world paid little heed. *Why Care about Israel?* aimed to raise consciousness about the Jewish state, opening up the Scriptures and God’s heart for Israel and the Arab Middle East.

## Revised for New Realities

As the book itself predicted, much has changed since then. New questions and issues have risen to the fore. Israel is no longer an obscurity to most believers. Many churches, institutions and governments have intentionally postured themselves for or against the Jewish state.

On a personal level, much has changed in my life as an author. A Messianic Jewish believer in Jesus (Yeshua), I now reside part-time in Israel. There I have been blessed with friendships not only with Messianic Jews but with Muslim-background believers, Christian Zionists, a wide spectrum of believers from the nations and Israelis who do not believe in Jesus. I have ministered, among other places, in Islamic regions of the Middle East. By God's grace, these new relationships and experiences have enabled me to gain a fuller perspective on the Arab-Israeli conflict. Therefore, *Why Still Care about Israel?* offers more of an inside, nuanced view than did its predecessor.

This book is intended to inspire Christlike love for the Jewish people—but not at the expense of any other people group. I certainly do not believe Israel does everything right. But neither do I point a finger at all her wrongdoings; too many others vociferously do so. My goal is to give you, as best as God has enabled me, revelation of His heart through biblical and factual truth, from a Messianic Israeli perspective.

In addition to summarizing topics addressed in the original *Why Care about Israel?*, this updated version unpacks—and suggests a response to—realities such as these:

- *New spiritual breakthroughs:* As the world is shaken, the Kingdom of God is taken (see Matthew 11:12). Judgment and mercy are released in tandem. Jesus wants to empower His Church at new levels of love and righteousness for the sake of the Gospel, even as darkness seems to increase on the earth.
- *New Christian anti-Israel theologies:* Growing numbers of believers wonder if Israel's existence as a state is biblically or morally justified. Some are aligning with new theologies

that teach God no longer has a unique or covenant-based purpose for the Jews.

- *New levels of warfare*: Israel may be forced into major military warfare in the near future. Geopolitical and spiritual shifts related to such a war will impact every nation on earth.
- *Social justice*: Social justice compels us to assess Israel's situation, as well as that of Palestinians and others in the Middle East, with biblical integrity and moral truth.
- *Palestinian statehood*: The goal to create a sovereign Palestinian state is gaining momentum worldwide and will have worldwide repercussions.
- *Israel's delegitimization and the new anti-Semitism*: A global movement to delegitimize Israel's existence overlaps with anti-Semitism and must be addressed.
- *Islamist awakening*: The Middle East is undergoing an Islamist awakening that must be reckoned with.
- *Western ideological revolution*: Increasing globalization, secularism and socioeconomic shakings are fueling a worldwide revolution in ideology. New challenges requiring new strategies face traditional Judeo-Christianity.
- *Bible prophecy*: Many Christians want to know what lies ahead and how to navigate changing realities during this epic season.

Despite the gravity of these issues, the ultimate focus of this book is on Jesus. When everything is changing around us, we must cling to the One who is the same today as He was yesterday, and will be tomorrow. No amount of information, no plethora of prophetic insight, can substitute for a heart humbly fixed on Him, a life surrendered to the Savior. *I believe we should be quite optimistic about the future, so long as we wholeheartedly follow Him into it.* The biblical truths and factual issues unpacked in

this book are intended to help you do precisely that. They are meant to serve as guiding principles for many years to come, however matters unfold in Israel, the Middle East and the rest of the world.

### *Pressing the Reset Button*

Before we start, I would ask that you please set aside certain preconceptions, if you have them. Suspend the echo of endless indictments against an allegedly belligerent or oppressive Jewish state. Subdue the extreme opposite cries of others who might deify the Jewish people or their ancestral homeland. In fact, why not ask the Holy Spirit to gently press your “reset button” on the subject? Then, look with me at the inspired and authoritative<sup>a</sup> Word of God. In it we see the Creator King picked an otherwise sorry little strain of humanity called Israel for the sake of His own glory. To them He lovingly assigned irrevocable responsibility for service, *not superiority*. We will see that His concept of a chosen people differs radically from what may be portrayed by some church sermons, mainstream media, Internet posts and Facebook friends.

Do not be surprised that Israel stirs controversy no matter what she does. Not only in the Old Covenant, but also in the New, Israel has always been about something and Someone much bigger than herself. As we head into what the Bible calls the last days of this present age, the controversy of Zion will intensify. God is using the tiny Jewish state, roughly 1/500th the size of the US or China, as a microcosm of what He is doing with us all. Indeed, what He is saying through Israel He is not quite saying—or doing—any other way. He is using her to reveal and refine the hearts of humanity. About that, I would like to tell you a story.

## Gazing into God's Heart

Jesus shares a striking parable in Matthew 25 about sheep and goats. The tale, as you probably know, is about more than farm animals and good deeds. What you may not know is that it concerns Israel.

When we gather before Him in judgment, the Lord says He will separate the righteous—those who feed, clothe, nurse and care for His needs—from those who do not. The righteous (sheep) receive their inheritance in the Kingdom of God; the unrighteous (goats) are cast from His presence. At that time, you and I will ask when it was that we saw and cared for Him—or did not. He will reply, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:40).

I was taught, probably like you, that this passage refers to the poor and needy, the oppressed and maligned. Indeed, that is a good and proper interpretation of the parable. But it has a more fundamental meaning we often overlook.

One day, in a devotional study, I sensed the Spirit speak, *Look carefully, Sandy. These “brothers and sisters of Mine” are the Jewish people.*

Startled, I pored over Scriptures and plowed through commentaries. There I discovered the Lord was speaking to His disciples explicitly about the end times. They had asked what would be the sign of His return and end of the age. In response, Jesus described several events, indicating that Israel would endure much hardship (see Matthew 24:3–25:30). He explained how to prepare for that trying time and stand firm in faith until the end of it. He cautioned that our actions toward His “brothers and sisters” in that day would affect our eternal destiny. In this context, it is clear that Jesus’ brothers and sisters refer

*fundamentally* to the Jews.<sup>1</sup> Commenting on the parable, a team of Bible scholars writes, “Ultimately, how a person treats the Jews will reveal whether or not he is saved.”<sup>2</sup>

Please do not misunderstand: Salvation is solely by grace through faith. But true salvation is evidenced by love and fruits of righteousness—which are reflected in our attitude and actions toward Israel. Why? As we will see in this book, how we treat Israel reflects to a real extent how we would treat the Lord Jesus Himself.

I realize that is a bold statement. As I have said, Israel is not perfect. I am not suggesting we approve of everything she does or disregard her sin. Nor do I say we should not care about, bless and lovingly reach out to Palestinians, Arabs or Muslims. In fact, if our love for Israel means we have no love for these others, then I daresay something is not right about our love for Israel.

The Creator does not play favorites with Israel. He chose her so that people like you and me in every nation and period of history would know—through her Scriptures, her Savior and her soul—His loving mercy and grace. Perhaps to the surprise of some, He is not finished with the Jewish nation—or with how He wants to bless us through her. Will we honor His choice to do so?

Do you desire to lay hold of all God has for you and stand firm to the end? (see Matthew 24:13). Then, my friend, He beckons you into His heart for His ancient covenant people. There you will discover a jealous and zealous love for the Jews, pulsating with passion. As a result, you will learn more of His love for *you* and lay hold of blessing for you personally that cannot be accessed, I am convinced, any other way.

Be forewarned: Others may not go with you. God is allowing Israel to serve as a strategic point of division. Some in the Body of Christ will stand with the sons and daughters of Jacob;

some will turn away. As conflict escalates between Israel and her enemies, your stand in the end will be less about the Jewish state and more about *Him*.

## Testing and Threshing in Justice

God uniquely connects Himself to the people and land of Israel. Long ago, He picked a spot on earth to put His Name forever (see 2 Chronicles 33:7; 1 Kings 9:3). The area served for centuries as a threshing floor, where wheat was sifted from chaff. God also chose a people—the Jews—to inherit and inhabit the land of that place. At His instruction, King David purchased the site and built an altar on it (see 2 Samuel 24:15–25). On this precise plot of real estate, David’s son Solomon constructed God’s Holy Temple. There His glory came down, dwelling in unequaled grandeur on earth. Located in Jerusalem, the place is now known as the Temple Mount.

Today the Temple Mount serves as a threshing floor no less than it did when David bought it three thousand years ago. This dry and dusty hilltop sifts nations’ souls through their contest for its control. And little wonder, for there Yeshua will rule and reign in Kingdom splendor—something His enemies are scrambling to prevent (see Isaiah 2:2–3; Psalm 132:13–14; Acts 3:21). The Temple Mount will prove the consummate testing ground, the place where Messiah and anti-Messiah, and the followers of both, will someday be exposed. It is a test God wants you to pass—because it is a test of love. And by design, it will involve the Jews.

The test would prove less genuine if issues involving Israel were simple, or the Jewish people never sinned. But sometimes Israel acts unjustly. Sometimes her government or military or

citizens make mistakes. Yet, as we will see, *true* justice is often perverted by the world’s collective understanding and response to Israel as nowhere else.

What does God say about the nations’ unjust response to the error of Israel’s ways?

“I am very jealous for Jerusalem and Zion, and I am very angry with the nations that feel secure. I was only a little angry [at Israel], but they [the nations] went too far with the punishment. . . . Whoever touches [Israel] touches the apple of [my] eye—I will surely raise my hand against them.”

Zechariah 1:14–15; 2:8–9

Those who treat Israel unjustly raise their hand, so to speak, as if to brazenly poke the Almighty in His eye. In response, God raises His hand against *them*; they suffer loss of spiritual vision. In this word picture, I see an expression of God’s fiery love for both Israel and the nations. Certainly He is not telling us to give Israel “blind support.” To the contrary, He wants us to make choices that enable our vision to be preserved. In a fast-changing world, He wants us to see where we are going, our steps aligned with His. If that is your desire too, this book will help you walk in His ways, discerning truth in love.

## In New Words of Old

The Bible’s most concise yet comprehensive teaching on the relationship between Israel and the Church—which includes you if you are a Christian—is found in Romans 9–11. This book follows the general flow of those pivotal chapters. In so doing, much time and space is devoted to the Islamist/Arab/Palestinian–Israeli conflict. In that context, any denunciation

of terror, fundamentalist Islam or enmity against Israel is not intended to reflect anything less than Messiah-like love toward those set against her. Recall the opening story of Joshua and his encounter with the Most High. God's perspective is Kingdom-oriented; ours must be, too.

Though not a scholarly treatise, *Why Still Care about Israel?* digs deep in the pursuit of truth. As a former attorney with a political science degree and seminary background, I have researched the theological, historical and journalistic works of others, distilling them into a format lay readers can understand. The information I share has been not only intensively investigated but drenched in years of intercessory prayer. In this book you will not encounter dry facts or superficial arguments, but reality replete with heaven's heartbeat.

A companion website, [www.whystillcareaboutisrael.com](http://www.whystillcareaboutisrael.com), supplements this book. Helpful study aids, including notes documenting or expounding on topics mentioned in the book, may be found there. Notes available online are designated by letters (a, b, c, etc.), while notes in the back of this book are designated by numbers (1, 2, 3, etc.). Some notes contain a dual designation. In that case, a portion of the note appears in the book, but expository matter is accessible online. This book can be easily read, however, without referring to any of the notes at all. They exist solely for more serious readers as a complementary tool.

*Why Still Care about Israel?* employs terms that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Where Hebrew or Arabic words are used, translations are provided. Jesus' name is substituted many times with the Hebrew *Yeshua*. In some instances I refer to God as *Yahweh*, using the standard English Tetragrammaton. The words *Old Covenant* and *Hebrew Scriptures* are employed synonymously with *Old Testament*. Bear in mind, however, that the Old Covenant contains within it several different covenants.

I use *Israel* interchangeably with *Jewish state*, *Jewish nation*, *national Israel*, *ethnic Israel* and occasionally *Zion*, referring either to the geographic territory or the Jewish people or both. This parallels the biblical usage, which reflects a dynamic unity between the people and the land.<sup>b</sup> The intended referent (land, people or both) should be clear from the context. Solely for the sake of convenience, the Jews are sometimes described as God's Old Covenant people, and the Church, His New Covenant people.

During the writing of this book, the United Nations upgraded its status of the Palestinian Authority to that of nonmember observer state. Presently there is no universal agreement on the name of the resulting geopolitical entity. Therefore, at different times I use *Palestinian Authority (PA)*, *Gaza*, *West Bank*, *Judea and Samaria* or *Palestine*. I trust that any offense taken at any of these terms will be minimal. For linguistic integrity, I have tried to use the most accurate name in each instance, given the particular context.

Where it is necessary to talk of anti-Semitism, the word refers to prejudicial hostility toward Jews, not other Semitic peoples. In discussions on Islam, the term *Islamism* or *Islamist* is used interchangeably with *fundamentalist*, *militant* or *extremist Islam*. The phrase *the West* or *Western world*, *civilization*, *culture* or *society* refer to all nations, wherever located, that identify with and embrace traditional Western values and freedoms.

Enmity against Israel in the Middle East can be difficult to succinctly describe. It is probably best characterized as the Islamist/Arab/Palestinian–Israeli conflict. For the sake of brevity, however, I usually use a condensed term, depending on context: *Islamist-Israeli*, *Arab-Israeli*, *Palestinian-Israeli* or a variation thereof.

As you read this book, you may feel angry or pained at times. I do not apologize for disclosing information that may provoke

your emotions. Truth must be told so that we can align with righteousness and respond accordingly. I do grieve along with you, however, for the fallen nature of humankind giving rise to those disturbing facts God wants us to face. My hope is that as *Why Still Care about Israel?* brings to light compelling realities and scriptural truths, you will experience His heart of love and grace—for all parties involved—as never before. I pray that when you turn the final page of this book, you will also know *God* as never before. Because in the end, Israel is all about *Him*.