

What Can the Book of Esther Teach Us About Modern-Day Israel?

Israel faces an ever-growing existential danger, an obvious reality to even a casual follower of the daily news. As in too many other times since 1948, enemies next-door—and some who are not quite next-door—boldly proclaim their intent to wipe the Jewish State off the map.

Evangelical Christians face danger of a different kind in relation to the physical threats against Israel's existence. The perils facing these Christians today come in the form of consequences to actions that involve taking a stand against the Jewish State, or from keeping silent in the face of menaces to Israel's security.

In recent years, some key evangelical leaders have joined a campaign that is spearheaded by Palestinian Christian leaders. According to their narrative, Palestinian suffering is the result of actions taken by Israel to ensure her security, rather than the aftermath of policies taken by their own officials, the Palestinian Authority.

The outcome is an anti-Israel rhetoric that sounds almost identical to two millennia of anti-Semitic tropes. By actively aligning themselves with this crusade, evangelicals discredit themselves before all who understand the inherent evil and ramifications of Christian anti-Semitism.

The current Christian Palestinian crusade is rooted in erroneous theology and rewritten history. It promotes the claim that Palestinians are the indigenous people of the land while the Jews are newcomers, having just arrived there in the 19th century. The replacement of Jews by Palestinians as the

indigenous people of the land is nothing more than a customized version of traditional replacement theology, which erroneously states that Christians have replaced Jews in the purposes of God.

The logical verdict from this belief system is that Israel's existence is illegitimate. By taking a stand against the legitimacy of the Jewish State—a position that can only be supported by a false theological/historical narrative—evangelicals lose their credibility in relation to the Scriptures they claim as authoritative.

Evangelicals also face danger when they keep silent concerning the threats to Israel's existence. History teaches us that all that is necessary for evil to prevail is for good people to do nothing. The early 20th-century German church provides a graphic example of the consequences of silence in the face of the attempted genocide of the Jewish people. This is an issue of great concern today as some evangelical leaders who have historically been strong supporters of Israel are now choosing to ignore the issue of Israel because it is too "controversial" in favor of advocating for unity in the Body of Christ instead.

Does this mean that—in the name of unity with those who name the name of Christ but who also delegitimize Israel—these leaders will, at some point in the near future, abandon the Jews to the fate intended for them by those who seek their annihilation?

The biblical book of Esther speaks directly to the peril of remaining silent and doing nothing in the face of evil, and its message is also quite relevant to the current existential danger facing Israel. In my recently published book, *Jews and Anti-Judaism in Esther and the Church*, I address these threats through a study of the relationship of historic theology to current events concerning Israel and the contested legitimacy of the Jewish State in the context of the ongoing Arab-Israeli

conflict.

In particular, the book demonstrates how the anti-Judaism that has been a central feature of Christian theology for two thousand years is prominent in the latest form of Christian anti-Semitism, which includes delegitimization of the State of Israel.

According to Rev. Dr. Petra Heldt, Professor, Rothberg International School, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem:

"This is the most careful study of the book of Esther and its anti-Jewish interpretations in the church I have read. By placing the book of Esther in the context of realpolitik and hermeneutics that are filled with Jewish resistance to attempted genocide, Tricia Miller addresses the history of Christian anti-Judaism, the errors of replacement theology, and anti-Zionism as the new anti-Judaism. The book reads like a detective story which, by way of excellent exegetical scholarship and sound academic perception of history, puts the contemporary issue of the contested legitimacy of the State of Israel into the context of the universal right and obligation of self-defense.

Tricia Miller earned her Ph.D. in Hebrew Bible from Claremont Graduate University and is a Senior Research Analyst for the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America.

Jews and Anti-Judaism in Esther and the Church may be purchased at .