

Why Israel Should Be More Than a Prophetic Timepiece to You

Do you want to know the burden of the Lord—His kingdom purposes—for today? Think *Israel*.

Does this mean others are excluded from a special place in our Father's heart? To the contrary, God's burden for Israel is central to His redemptive plans for all peoples. Not for Israel's sake but His, the destiny He designed for Israel will someday be fulfilled.

To be sure, some believers with little grasp of God's heart for the Jews undeniably love Him deeply. For over 2,000 years, countless numbers of such saints have even laid down their lives for Jesus. In no way do I impugn their integrity or spirituality. But in these last days, the world is different. In it, Israel has been placed center stage before a global audience. God's love story is on divine display as the nations lock in on the tiny Jewish state. And He is noting our response. Will it be one of love, "the most excellent way" (1 Cor. 12:31)?

According to 1 Corinthians 13, without love, we are nothing. Without love, even the priceless gifts of the Spirit and His mantles for ministry add zero to our worth. If we speak in tongues or prophesy without love, we make only noise. Lacking love, our faith may move mountains but fail to bless. If we give all we possess to the poor or become martyrs for Messiah, we gain nothing without love. Love is the greatest gift and most excellent way. It never fails; it lasts forever. Love is the most valued substance of the universe.

Jesus cautioned that, in the last days, kingdom conflict between good and evil would greatly increase. Natural human

sensibilities would be offended, embittered or hardened by the onslaught of iniquity. As a result, the love of most would grow cold (Matt. 24:12–13). Messiah's true followers, however, will stand firm to the end. They will not just endure the times but engage with His sacrificial strength in the intimate communion of His *ahav*.

Pure, Messiah-like love is given without condition, solely to bless the beloved. Free of ulterior motive, such love is the ultimate substance and test of our faith. It is that which the Lord has always radically required of those who dare follow Him fully. And today, He is using Israel to help us attain to it. Take, for example, the story of one Arab believer I know, a former Muslim whom we will call "S."

"S" used to train young children to kill Israelis and took pride in personally snuffing out more than one Jewish life. But then he had a dramatic encounter with God. Now he loves and serves Jesus, the Arabs—and Jews. How was "S's" heart transformed from one of hate to love? Someone told him that to know God he would have to love a Jew (namely, Jesus). When that person set a Bible before him, "S" began to shake violently. He did not know if he was shaking from rage, fear, the presence of God or all three. But he did know the book was about Israel, his sworn enemy.

"S" says that when he eventually read the Bible, and through it came to know God's love for Israel, he felt love for the first time in his life. "I grew up hating—and especially hating Jews. When I was willing to love them, God filled me with His love for *me*." Today when "S" ministers the gospel to Jews, supernatural love softens their hearts toward the Savior.

Not unlike what He did with "S," God used Israel to demonstrate His love in the life of my young friend Emily. For years Emily was fascinated with end-time prophecy. Ever since she learned that Israel serves as God's prophetic "timepiece,"

she told me, she claimed to love the Jewish state. But whenever I saw Emily, she was intrigued with just one thing. The woman had question upon question about how the latest news events from the Holy Land could signal the Second Coming of Christ. Finally, I shared with Emily that God had another way for her to relate to the Jewish people she said she loved. As you will see momentarily, her life was subsequently transformed.

Since Israel's modern-day restoration, many believers have, like Emily, viewed the Jewish state as an exciting prophetic timepiece. Indeed, that is an aspect—albeit a secondary one—of her existence. As a prophetic people through whom God speaks, Israel uniquely reflects the hour of world history. But Jesus did not die for prophetic timepieces. Neither is the Father's heart ravished over some cosmic hourglass. Israel is His nation of treasured souls, most of whom desperately need salvation.

Certainly, God wants us cooperating with His prophetic Word and plans. But genuine love does not depend on a prophetic agenda. If our primary concern with Israel is prophecy, God wants to take our love to higher levels by taking us deeper into His heart. This He tenderly did with Emily, who began visiting Israel to minister in compassion to Holocaust survivors and terror victims. Instead of living for the news, she *is* good news to Israel.

Will you, like “S” or Emily, choose the most excellent way in loving God's ancient covenant people—not because her land is holy, not because prophecy gets fulfilled there, not because you seek to convert Jews and not because you want to get blessed? He is asking you to love Israel because He loves Israel, unconditionally, uncompromisingly.

*Excerpted from Why Still Care About Israel? **Sandra Teplinsky** has been in Messianic Jewish ministry since 1979. She is president and founder of Light of Zion, a Messianic outreach*

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