

Will Evangelicals Derail Biden's Palestinian State Push?

Could Christians help Israel prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state in Judea and Samaria?

During Donald Trump's presidency, his Evangelical supporters didn't seem to care if Judea and Samaria were under Israeli sovereignty or not. But that was because, under Trump's peace plan, all the areas of the biblical heartland would have remained and did remain in Israeli hands, either under IDF control or through a phased potential annexation.

But now, with U.S. President Joe Biden wanting to place the biblical heartland—areas like Hebron, Beit El and Shiloh—under Palestinian control, a two-state resolution that once felt like it had the element of peacebuilding now feels religiously threatening.

In the aftermath of Oct. 7, the religious argument is also enforced by a strengthened strategic one.

For Christians and Religious Zionists, Judea and Samaria are filled with places of religious significance like Hebron, where Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sara, Rebecca and Leah are buried. It's Beth El, where Jacob dreamed of a ladder to heaven. And it's Shiloh, the very first capital of Israel, where the tabernacle stood for hundreds of years.

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"When Christians think of Israel, they think of Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria," explains Josh Reinstein, president of the Israel Allies Foundation. "Christians want access to Hebron,

Beth El and Shiloh.”

Religious Zionist Party MK Ohad Tal, a member of the Knesset Christian Allies Caucus, says he believes the reason American Christians have actively supported a Palestinian state is that, from an American perspective, compromise is the solution when there's a conflict.

A December Philos Project survey found that 81% of U.S. Christians support a two-state solution, in which both Israel and the Palestinians govern themselves within recognized borders. According to the study, 88% of American Christians think Israelis should decide their statehood and government, while 76% believe Palestinians should have the same rights.

However, Tal says, when Christians understand that Biden's two-state solution means “establishing a terror-supporting state in the biblical heart of Israel, that it means giving up the biblical heartland, they are against it and with you in a second.”

Reinstein says that one of the reasons Evangelicals might not have been more vocal until now is also because of a “huge misinformation campaign” that confused many followers, who may not have been to Israel and have not realized that the “West Bank”—named as such by Jordan during its occupation of the area West of the Jordan River from 1949 to 1967—was the exact location of the Judea and Samaria they read about in their bibles.

Tuly Weisz, founder of Israel365, adds: “When the Biden administration discusses removing Jews from their homes in the West Bank, it sounds better than removing Jews from Judea.”

Evangelicals see Jewish settlement in Judea and Samaria as the fulfillment of many Bible prophecies. For Christians, the prophets promised that the children of Israel would return to these mountains and rebuild Jewish cities and towns. That is already happening, with nearly 500,000 Jews living in the

biblical heartland—whether Israel “annexes” the territory or not.

Christians do not want to evacuate Jews from the heartland that many of them have worked so hard to support through funding aliyah and resettlement efforts.

Trump’s Deal of the Century included a Palestinian state—though not requiring the relinquishment of most biblical areas to the Palestinians. And even that riled up a lot of Christians, who were caught by surprise and disappointed by this, according to Weisz.

Some Christians even say that Trump’s losing the election was “punishment for threatening to divide God’s land,” Weisz says. “They don’t believe Trump would make that mistake in his second term.”

In order to make sure that the Evangelicals are educated enough about the land, groups like Israel365, The Israel Guys and the Israel Allies Foundation worked with the National Religious Broadcasters to replace the use of the term “West Bank” with “Judea and Samaria,” at least in Christian media.

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At the NRB convention last week in Nashville, Tennessee, the president of the 1,000-member organization that reaches millions of viewers, listeners, and readers, Troy Miller, signed a resolution stating, “NRB opposes the use of the erroneous term ‘West Bank’ to describe the biblical heartland of Israel and calls on its members to refer to the region by its historic name of Judea and Samaria.”

Miller said, “I think your words matter today. And the truth matters as well. It is time for us to step up and be honest about the truth of what’s happened in Israel, in the

definition of this land.”

Reinstein, who authored a book in 2020 called “Titus, Trump and the Triumph of Israel,” explains that the goal is to ensure all Christians understand what they are talking about when they say West Bank. This can help them to have a voice against Biden’s one-sided Palestinian state proposal.

Former U.S. Ambassador to Israel David Friedman says that the Evangelicals supported the Abraham Accords because they saw it as a plan toward peace without compromising biblical territory. Similarly, he believes they’ll be Israel’s natural ally for stopping an unwanted two-state solution.

“The Abraham Accords were very much rooted in theology and national security,” Friedman says. “What is happening now, post October 7, you have a confluence of two different points of view coming together—one is the theological view of Judea and Samaria, and the second is the national security view.”

He says—and all Israeli polls and the government confirmed—that very few people in Israel feel comfortable seeing land being given to the Palestinians from a security perspective, especially given that around 80% of Palestinians in the West Bank said they support Hamas and the massacre it carried out on Oct. 7.

Christians want to ensure their biblical heritage is preserved and accessible.

Says Friedman: The interests of “religious Christians and Jews and secular Israelis who want to avoid another October 7 are aligned today like never before.”{eo}

This article originally appeared on ALL ISRAEL NEWS, and is used with permission.

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