

Desert View Bible Church Statement of Principle Regarding Scriptural Understanding of the Abrahamic Covenant; Present-Day Application and Implications for the State of Israel and the Jewish People

Principle in Summary

The Elder Shepherds of Desert View Bible Church (DVBC) are charged to lead our congregation from a Scriptural foundation.¹ This Statement of Principle provides our church body with clarity concerning God's eternal covenant with Abraham, his progeny, the promised land as well as our Christian response to the State of Israel's self-determination and the dignity of the Jewish people worldwide.

God's covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3)² is established eternally and applies to His chosen people past, present and future. It also includes the land "from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates" (Gen. 15:18, 22:17; Heb. 11:12). God's covenant promises regarding Israel and the land remain unchanged (Jdgs. 2:1b). Additionally, Scripture does not assert that Israel has been replaced by the Christian Church. The Apostle Paul strongly affirms this when he proclaims, "... has God rejected his people? By no means" (Rom. 11:1)!

To God's glory and our benefit, elect Gentiles have been *grafted in* (Rom 11:17) to the family of God through faith and are partakers of the nourishment provided by the Root which is Jesus Christ (Jn. 15:5). As such, we, the elect in Christ are grateful to God for Abraham and his descendants, who preserved His Word for centuries and Abraham's descendent, David, through whom our Savior has come (Eph. 3:6)!

This then requires God's people to support the State of Israel in her self-determination and the dignity of the Jewish people worldwide. In fact, we stand for the dignity of all people and oppose discrimination in all its forms. This should not be interpreted to mean that we stand blindly with Israel and the Jewish people in all matters; rather, it is our role to share the love of Christ, model His example in truth and grace and bear witness to His imminent return.

Statement of Principle in Detail

In addition to the summary provided, the DVBC Elder Shepherds determined to provide greater detail as to Scripture's position concerning God's eternal covenant with His

¹ All Scriptural references are taken from the English Standard Version unless noted.

² Gen. 12:1-3: Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."



chosen people; application for His elect today, and our responsibility related to the state of Israel and the Jewish people worldwide.

Our Reliance on Scripture

The DVBC Elder Shepherds, which comprises the Lead Pastor as well as men elected by the church Ministry Partners, affirm that the Scriptures comprised of sixty-six books of the Old and New Testament are without error in their original writings and of supreme and final authority in faith and life (Matt. 5:18: 1 Thes. 2:13: 2 Tim. 3:16,17). As such, the Elder Shepherds are responsible to teach God's Word (1 Tim. 3:2), to hold firm to it faithfully, to provide sound doctrine and rebuke those who contradict it (Tit. 1:9).

God's Heart for Israel and His People

God's covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3; expanded in Gen. 15 and 17) comprises: 1) blessing upon Abraham, 2) offspring through which our Savior has come, 3) a homeland in which to thrive, and 4) God's promise that all among the nations who bless Abraham, and his offspring, will be blessed.

The Covenant: An Everlasting People & Place

After centuries of upheaval, persecution, and exile, the world saw God's promises being upheld when the Jewish people were officially returned to the land God promised through a vote of the United Nations following the atrocities of World War II and when the State of Israel declared independence on May 14, 1948.³ While made official in the 20th century, it is important to recognize that *the Land* was deeded by God—a claim dating back thousands of years to the promises made to Abram.

God chose Abram and directed him to leave his family in Ur (present day Iraq) among the Chaldeans to a place God would show him (Gen. 12:1-3). Abram obeyed God without knowing what lay ahead, yet Abram's (renamed Abraham) obedience of faith resulted in God's blessing upon him with the land occupied by the Canaanite, Hittite, Amorite, Perizzite, Jebusite, and the Girgashite peoples (Neh. 9:7,8).

Additionally, God's everlasting covenant with Abraham included blessing with progeny more numerous than the stars in the heavens or the grains of sand of the seashore (Gen. 22:17; Heb. 11:12) and a lineage from which the Lord Jesus descended (Mt. 1:1). God affirms His covenant as everlasting stating, "I brought you up from Egypt and brought you into the land that I swore to give to your fathers. I said, 'I will never break my covenant with you'" (Jdgs. 2:1b). There is no 'expiration date on God's covenant with Abraham or his descendants!

³ Daniel Gordis, *Israel: A Concise History of a Nation Reborn* (New York: Harper Collins. 2016), 168.

Many passages throughout the Old (OT) and New Testaments (NT) reference the Abrahamic covenant, including the land granted:

- “For all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever” (Gen. 13:15).
- “Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you” (Gen. 13:17).
- On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates” (Gen. 15:18).
- “to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies” (quoting Zech.Lk. 1:72—74).
- “You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed’” (Acts 3:25).
- Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring (Gal 3:16a).

Important points to note are that neither Abraham nor his offspring ever fully occupied all the land because of their disobedience through the centuries. Additionally, the covenant made with Abraham follows the lineage of Isaac through Sarah rather than Ishmael (Gen. 17:15-21). Thus, the covenant continues through Jacob (Israel) to David and from David to Jesus, as foretold. As we will see, the covenant continues through Abraham to his family of nations today.

Grafting in of the Gentiles

Scripture does not assert that Israel is being replaced as God’s chosen people (see Heb. 8 analysis below) with the coming of Jesus as the Apostle Paul proclaims, “I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means” (Rom. 11:1)! Instead, the arrival of Messiah initiates a purification process within Israel, resulting in the formation of a restored people of God. This restored people, composed of Jews who believe in Jesus as the Messiah and Lord, serves as the conduit through which the gospel is disseminated to the Gentiles. This Divine plan has always been in motion, as evidenced in Acts 3:25; 15:13-17 and Romans 11:16-24.

For the Church, now predominantly composed of gentile Christians, this passage holds significant implications. It underscores the fact that we cannot assert “insider” status within the Church. The Church has not replaced the people of the covenant made with Abraham. Instead, as Paul states in Romans 11:17, we become part of the “you” addressed through the benevolent act of God through Jesus the Messiah. As a wild olive branch, we are grafted into the root established in Judaism and thus become a partaker of the nourishment provided by the Root, which is Jesus Christ.

Statement of the Mystery – Rom. 11:25-27

The apostle Paul refers to the rejection of the Jews for a period, followed by their restoration after the conversion of the gentiles, as a *mystery*. This mystery is that

through the Gospel, the gentiles are heirs [together with Israel (NIV)], members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus (Eph. 3:6). Despite that most Jews at that time rejected Jesus as the Messiah, the first to accept Him were in fact Jewish.

In his address to the Roman believers Paul explains that this “hardening” of Israel is “partial and temporary” (Rom. 11:25). Its purpose is to create space for the incoming Gentiles to become part of God’s people through faith in Christ; however, God’s love for Israel remains undiminished, and God desires to demonstrate his mercy (v. 25-32). When the full number or “fullness” (v. 25) of Gentiles has entered God’s kingdom, God will restore Israel and bring them to salvation in Christ.

Those who advance a *replacement* position look to the book of Hebrews for support. The writer infers that the *first covenant* (Heb 8:7, 8:13) is “faulty” (v. 7) and is “obsolete” and ready to “vanish away (v.13). They assert that the *first covenant* references God’s promises to Abraham. We reject this exegesis, noting that the writer in chapter 8 is referencing the supremacy of Jesus over that of Moses (v.5) and the law (v.4) and they—Moses and the law—are the referents in this passage rather than Abraham.

The Lord’s Return—Our Future Home

The book of *Revelation* depicts Jesus’ return to earth as King. Jesus will return to Jerusalem, on the Mount of Olives (see Acts 1:11). Zechariah also prophesies (Zech. 14:4):

On that day his [the Lord’s] feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward.

How this will come about is foretold in Revelation 21:9-12:

Then came one of the seven angels ... saying, “Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.” And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God ... It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed.

Jerusalem is the eternal city and the dwelling place of God with man (Rev. 21:3). The gates that surround it are etched with the names of those through whom the promise is fulfilled when Jesus returns. We await His second coming and the establishment of His Kingdom with great expectation. This is the promise to all who believe in Jesus.

Our Present Responsibility as Witnesses

That the world needs Jesus is indisputable within the confessing Christian community; Jews are no exception. We understand that the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18,19) is not optional. As we work toward evangelism and discipleship of all people groups both corporately and individually, we are to actively engage the Jewish people with the reality of Jesus the Son.

The Modern Moment and Our Response

That the Jews have suffered centuries of discrimination and abuse is beyond question. Yet, the restoration of the Jewish people to their homeland is beyond miraculous. The Jewish people worldwide and across time have one thing in common, *persecution*. Yet out of the ashes, this people have been imbued with resilience, determination, and as Scripture promises, the future hope of worshiping *Yeshua*, the Hebrew name for Jesus, when He returns.

The Evil of Antisemitism

With the events of October 7, 2023, there have been countless acts of violence combined with venomous rhetoric against Israel and the Jewish people worldwide. But the evil of antisemitism is not a recent phenomenon. It dates back to the beginning when Satan manipulated mankind's instruction, worked to disrupt God's covenant with Abraham and His chosen people, promoted the enslavement of Jacob's descendants in Egypt, and attempted to thwart Christ's incarnation and sacrifice. Satan's antagonism toward the Jews—and now Christ-followers—continues today.

Once Moses succeeded in leading the Israelites out of Egypt, Scripture recounts the many tribes and people groups—primarily idol worshipers—who openly opposed or hated the Israelites as they returned to the land promised to Abraham. Among them were the Ammonites, Moabites, and Philistines, all of whom lived near to Israel. Subsequently, more distant polytheistic foes including Assyria, Babylon, Greece, and ultimately Rome, attacked, subjugated, and persecuted the Israelites.

Over time, gentile Christian theologians asserted heresies that led to the marginalizing of Jews who did not accept Jesus as Messiah. Traced to Origen and expanded by Augustine, the adoption of allegorical rather than literal interpretation of Scripture fanned these flames.⁴ As a result, Israelites were deemed to have abrogated their claims to the covenantal promises of God, which theologians determined now belonged to the *Church*. This *replacement theology* not only dislodged the Jews as God's chosen people, but fostered hatred toward them resulting in the newly invented term: *antisemitism*.⁵

⁴ Hal Lindsey, *The Road to the Holocaust* (Bantam Books New York: 1989), 7.

⁵ <https://njop.org/the-origin-of-word-anti-semitism/>. Accessed 11/11/2024.

In the ensuing centuries, much of the antisemitism was centered in Europe. Jews became the target of Christians during the various crusades and later were the scapegoats and victims of the *Inquisition*. Then Jews were even derided and maligned by otherwise prominent Christians such as Luther, who called the Jews murderers of Christ, and Calvin, who merely considered the Jews as anachronisms and thus replaced by the Church.⁶

Allegorical interpretation of prophecy as noted led to the marginalization of Jews. Since the fourth century this has produced three increasingly severe and *cascading* anti-Jewish policies within society:

1. The missionaries of Christianity said, 'You have no right to live among us as Jews' (convert to Christianity or leave),
2. Secular rulers then proclaimed, 'You have no right to live among us' (leave the country or be forced into ghettos),
3. The German Nazis at last decreed, 'You have no right to live' (the Holocaust).⁷

The ascension of Adolf Hitler, his subsequent instigation of World War II, and his attempts to annihilate the Jews caught many unaware. Yet, he made his intentions clear in his book, *Mein Kampf*, and in his many speeches.⁸ Too many failed to take him at his word. One might say that Israel made the same mistake prior to the invasion of Hamas on October 7, 2023.

The Modern State of Israel

It is unprecedented that a people enslaved, driven, and dispersed from their homeland have then returned centuries later. Yet miraculously, that is what happened when the United Nations voted to establish the State of Israel, a home for the Jewish people within its historic borders, following the horrors of World War II.

On May 14, 1948, Israel's Declaration of Independence was signed "by a broad coalition of Jews"⁹ proclaiming, "By virtue of our natural and historic right and on the strength of the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, [we] hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish state in the Land of Israel, to be known as the State of Israel."¹⁰

⁶ The Historical Roots of the Anti-Israel Positions of Liberal Protestant Churches, No. 57, 1 June 2007 / 15 Sivan 5767, Jerusalem Center for Security and Foreign Affairs (JCSA), <https://jcpa.org/article/historical-roots-anti-israel-positions-liberal-protestant-churches-2/>

⁷ Lindsey, *The Road to the Holocaust*, 6.

⁸ Lindsey, *The Road to the Holocaust*, 3.

⁹ Gordis, *Israel*, 168.

¹⁰ Gordis, *Israel*, 166.



Harry S. Truman, being introduced after his presidency as a man who helped create Israel, quipped, “What do you mean, ‘helped to create’? I am Cyrus,” referring to the ancient King of Persia who allowed Nehemiah and Ezra to rebuild Jerusalem and restore worship. Under Truman, the United States was the first nation to recognize Israel’s sovereignty.

The land that God had promised to Abraham and his descendants was returned. Yet, preserving the Jewish state has proven difficult: having to endure wars, terrorist bombings within its borders, land-for-peace deals that never achieved the latter, and decades-long chants of death to Israel (the little Satan) and death to her longstanding ally, the United States of America (the big Satan).

As Christians, we recognize the covenant of Genesis 12 remains intact. As Americans, we also recognize Israel as a close ally, the Middle East’s only democracy that also acts as our intelligence partner in the region, and home to a lineage to which we are “grafted in” and grateful.

This does not mean we turn a blind eye to the actions that violate our faith or our sovereign interests. It is well-documented that Jewish converts to Christianity in Israel are treated poorly, and other minorities in the land are dealt with severely. As we become aware of these abuses, we must speak out against them and condemn persecution in all forms. Yet, this does not negate our obligation to pray for and work toward Israel’s self-determination as well as the dignity of our Jewish relatives worldwide.

Our Response

As true followers of Jesus Christ, we must be known by our love, living out the fruit of the Spirit in all interactions. As the Apostle Paul exhorts, we must exhibit the fruit of the Spirit: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Gal. 5:22-23).

Antisemitism—the prejudice against or hatred of Jews—is an outcome of not taking God’s Word literally. The antidote is adhering to the literal meaning of God’s promises and prophecies regarding Israel and its people. Moreso, it is to follow Jesus’ admonition to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev. 19:18, MT. 19:19, Mk. 12:31, Lk. 10:27).

Within our DVBC church context and in our spheres of influence, we can allow our spiritual fruit to be shown to Israel and the Jews in tangible ways:

1. Recognize God’s love for Israel as evidenced by His eternal covenants.
2. As gentiles, acknowledge with gratitude that we are grafted into God’s family as adopted children.

3. Remember Paul's teaching where he exhorts gentiles to not think more highly of themselves or be proud of having been grafted into God's family tree because we are but wild branches while the Jews are the original branches (Rom. 11:18-25).
4. As true followers of Christ we should seek to bless our Jewish relatives.
5. Recognize and celebrate the many fulfilled prophecies about Israel, such as the promised return of the Hebrews to their covenantal land, and the fact that God will keep and protect a remnant of the Jews until His return.
6. Remember God's promise to bless those who bless Israel and curse those who curse Israel (Gen. 12:3). As followers of Jesus, we must remember that He instructed us to love our neighbors as ourselves, which certainly includes the Jews.
7. Adhere to Jesus' words: "Anyone who isn't with me opposes me, and anyone who isn't working with me is actually working against me" (Rom. 11:28b-29). Paul again reminds us that the Jews are still God's chosen people. He (Jesus) loves them because He chose their ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
8. God's gifts and His call can never be withdrawn. We need to labor with the Spirit in bringing the Good News to the Jews, remembering always that Jesus Himself is Jewish.
9. Teach our congregation about the Jewish Feasts and their meanings and recall them throughout each year.
10. Pray for Israel, the Jewish people dispersed throughout the world, and the return of Messiah in glory to His eternal city.

This Statement of Principle is prayerfully and humbly submitted in love to our congregation as our Scriptural understanding of the Abrahamic covenant, present-day application and implications for the state of Israel and the Jewish people. It is the Shepherds' objective to provide clarity to foster unity – and from unity, love towards one another, our neighbors, and above all, fidelity to our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ.