

Helsinki Consultation on Jewish Continuity in the Body of Messiah 2019 Jerusalem Statement on People, Land, and State

The following statement was drafted and ratified in Jerusalem on 30 May 2019 (Iyar 25 5779) by Boris Balter, Mark Kinzer, Antoine Levy, Lisa Loden, David Neuhaus, Svetlana Panich, Ephraim Radner, and Etienne Vetö.

We, members of the Helsinki Consultation, have gathered in Jerusalem to reflect together on the theological significance of this city and of the land of Israel. We are Jewish followers of Yeshua from Israel and the diaspora who are members of various ecclesial communities. At times we also hold conflicting theological and political views. This enormous diversity reflects the diversity within the Jewish world, as well as that existing within the body of Messiah. We are part of the Jewish people, and so what is happening in this place touches all of us deeply, whether or not we live here. Therefore, we recognize the need not only to reflect on the theological significance of the city and the land, but also in that light to consider their current circumstances and the meaning of the State of Israel and the events which led to its birth.

Common Ground

We believe that God's covenant with the Jewish people centers Jewish life in the land to which God led Abraham and Sarah and in the city where God chose to place his Name. That land and city orient Israel's prayer, practical concern, and eschatological hope. While divine providence has brought *Am Yisrael* to the four corners of the earth for a worthy purpose, Jerusalem—the center of *Eretz Yisrael*—always remains the revealed reference point at the heart of Jewish corporate identity. As Jewish disciples of Yeshua we affirm that this reality has not diminished with the death and resurrection of Israel's Messiah. Just as Yeshua's redemptive work confirms rather than negates God's covenant with Israel, so it also sustains the intimate bond connecting this people to this land.

We recognize that *Eretz Yisrael*-Palestine today is a land in conflict. Two peoples call this place their home with mutually exclusive views regarding their status within it. We recognize and accept the ongoing historic presence and attachment of both the Jewish and the Palestinian peoples to this land. We also recognize the theological dimension of the challenge of these two peoples living here together. We see this as a God-given opportunity for both peoples to demonstrate a model of peaceful co-existence and fruitful cooperation, and for this land to become a place of healing rather than a place of conflict and division. This ongoing conflict and the manner of its resolution are a test for both peoples, for the body of Messiah and, by extension, for all humanity.

Diverse Perspectives

We, members of the Helsinki Consultation, disagree concerning the attribution of divine intent to historical events such as the modern waves of Jewish immigration to Palestine and the establishment of the State of Israel.

View One: Some of us believe that the ingathering of Jews to the land corresponds to God's will and is the fruit of his providence. It reverses the path of exile that brought with it captivity, dispersion, and the loss of a Temple that marked the indwelling of God amidst his people. We who hold this view discern the manifestation of God's benevolence towards his people in this reversal, especially after the Shoah, and in the overcoming of obstacles which from a human perspective were formidable. This ingathering receives a concrete expression in the State of Israel. As a result of its establishment, Jews recover their dignity as a nation called to live according to the ethical norms of Israel's Torah. We honor the courage of those who have made the sacrifice of their lives for this vision. Finally, we believe that the ingathering of Jews to the land and the establishment here of a self-governing corporate Jewish presence are essential elements in

the eschatological drama in which Yeshua is gradually revealed to the Jewish people. Jewish followers of Yeshua are active participants in this unfolding drama. At its climax, Israel will acknowledge Yeshua as its king and will welcome him home with the words “*Baruch Habo b'Shem Adonai*” (Psalm 118:26; Luke 13:35).

View Two: Others of us are agnostic with regard to God’s intent in contemporary *Eretz Yisrael*-Palestine. Those of us who hold this view affirm that God is undoubtedly at work in history, but discernment of providence is linked to discernment of the fruits of the events in question. We believe that the Jewish diaspora is essential to the Jewish vocation which enriches the world. Furthermore, the establishment of the State of Israel cannot solely be understood as providential, attributing to God’s will the injustices that this event caused Palestinians, created in God’s image and likeness and in value equal to Jews before God. We are troubled by the State’s development, which we see as incongruent with what our people is called to be, especially in relationship to the Palestinian people. Finally, we believe that the prophetic promise of ingathering refers to the inclusion of all nations in the heavenly Jerusalem. We affirm that Jerusalem and the land remain central in the eschatological perspective of the expansion of the Kingdom of God to the ends of the earth. This expansion across all borders occurs through the revelation of Yeshua, King of Israel, and Sovereign of the nations.

Common Witness

These conflicting views do not preclude a common understanding of our practical witness, based on our faith in Yeshua and on our fundamental convictions regarding the relationship of the Jewish and Palestinian peoples to *Eretz Yisrael*-Palestine.

We recognize the complexities of the political situation in the land. We do not sacralise any state, for states are only a means for building up the common good, and never ends in themselves. In light of the bond between *Am Yisrael* and the land, the Jewish people in *Eretz Yisrael* have a special vocation to fulfill the ethical demands of the Torah. As Jews we commend this vocation’s pursuit. We rejoice when this vocation is realized, even as we are convinced that we must repent when it is contradicted. With all Jews, we claim the duty to exercise our free judgment to assess the policies and actions of the Israeli government, welcoming what is good and condemning what needs to be condemned.

Living righteously in the land entails self-sacrifice. Yeshua, a Jew of the land, dies in this land for Jews, for Palestinians, and for all; he reconciles them to the Father, and to one another. Joined to the body of the Messiah, we are given the grace to follow Yeshua in this labor of reconciliation proclaimed in the Sermon on the Mount.

We believe that Jewish disciples of Yeshua are a bridge between the Church and the Jewish people. This expression of reconciled existence is an embodiment of hope for reconciliation in the land of *Eretz Yisrael*-Palestine, and for all humanity. Our ardent prayer is for the coming of the Kingdom that will embrace Israel and all the nations.