Evaluating Criticisms of the Nation-State of Israel for Antisemitism

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The nation-state of Israel has stood in the world for nearly eighty years after the catastrophic events in the first and second centuries in the land. It has always faced critics during this recent eighty-year period. The current period, however, has manifested a significant increase in antisemitic violence. An academic study of worldwide antisemitism concluded that more Jews have faced attacks in 2025 since before 1995.[1] The events and ideologies that are part of the present decade make a simple relationship between criticism of Israel and antisemitism untenable. However, the risk of antisemitism behind such criticism is equally problematic.[2] Dispensationalists (both traditional and progressive) may face unique challenges in this climate. They especially must nuance the present issue amid their zeal to affirm the importance of God's future plan for Israel.[3] In that light, this present paper aims to reset the table. It considers the basis upon which dispensationalist and non-dispensationalist, Christian and non-Christian, can potentially find fault with the activities of the present nation-state of Israel without being antisemitic. It will consider the current political context and the definition of antisemitism, several key theological perspectives, and the place of international and natural law in the discussion. The conclusion is that however risky, criticisms can and indeed should happen where the nation has done wrong but without antisemitism and with no direct denial of present or fulfilled prophecy.[4]

The Political Context

[1] The Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry at Tel Aviv University and The Irwin Cotler Institute at Tel Aviv University, "Antisemitism Worldwide: Report for 2025," PDF, Antisemitism Worldwide: Report for 2025, March 2026, https://english.tau.ac.il/sites/default/files/media_server/all-units/sp2026/Antisemitism%20Worldwide%202025%20%E2%80%93%20Full%20Report.pdf.

[2] Charles E. Schumer, *Antisemitism in America: A Warning*, First edition, with Josh Molofsky (New York; Boston: Grand Central, 2025), 189.

[3] The real issue for dispensationalists concerning this paper is not Israel in the past, the Church in the present, or Israel in the future. The issue is Israel in the present as manifested in the nation-state of Israel of 1948. While examining several dispensationalists in history, the relative neglect of Israel in the preset this subject was noted by Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*, Rev. ed (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 1994), 380, 604, 715. On the latter page reference, he notes "While Barbieri's view of modern Israel is typical of most Dispensationalists, it is not true of all, and *even some Dispensationalists do not know where the State of Israel fits in theologically*" (Emphasis mine).

[4] Nothing in the argument of this paper directly depends on a conclusion that the Israel of 1948 is there in fulfillment of prophecy or it is not there in fulfillment of prophecy. The present author favors some skepticism about such prophetic fulfillment though recognizes that it is a possibility.

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The political moment following October 7, 2023, is not unique to the last fifty years.[5] However, the present moment has demonstrated a significantly higher level of disagreement concerning Israel. Antisemitism can be examined in three broad categories—the antisemitism of the left, the antisemitism of the right, and antisemitism of Islam.[6] These are categories that fit across the entirety of the existence of the present state of Israel, even predating them. However, a brief survey of the current debates is warranted. This section will consider comments and discussions from two mainstream United States politicians, and two popular critics of Israel.

Mainstream Politicians: Schumer and Pence

Chuck Schumer, a Jewish Democrat and current U. S. Senate Minority Leader, and Mike Pence, a recent Republican vice president and a presidential candidate, have both written books recently pertinent to recent events concerning antisemitism though in different ways.[7] Pence has offered a restatement of traditional conservativism against populism in the tradition of Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan.[8] In Schumer's case, he wrote specifically concerning the situation of American antisemitism. These recent books are appropriate places to consider more mainstream thoughts of politicians on the current climate within the United States.[9] While Schumer is Jewish, his approach to governance in a diverse city and state led him to traditionally not make the most of this heritage.[10]

Schumer's book includes personal anecdotes of his Jewish heritage, reflections on Jewish culture generally, and examinations of antisemitism on the left and right and the problem of the state of Israel concerning antisemitism. He observes that Jews tended to

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[5] As two examples in a book published a decade ago, observe that there was the 2004 ruling of The International Court of Justice against Israeli plans to protect themselves from suicide bombers by constructing a wall in the occupied territories and the Boycott, Divest, and Sanction movement concerning companies who directly or indirectly support Israel. On these two examples, see Robert Nicholson, "Theology and Law: Does the Modern State of Israel Violate Its Call to Justice in the Covenant by Its Relation to International Law?," in *The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on Israel & the Land*, ed. Gerald R. McDermott (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 249–251 and Shadi Khalloul, "Theology and Morality: Is Modern Israel Faithful to the Moral Demands of the Covenant in Its Treatment of Minorities?" in *The New Christian Zionism*, 299.

[6] Jeffrey Herf, *Three Faces of Antisemitism: Right, Left and Islamist*, Studies in Contemporary Antisemitism (London; New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis, 2024), https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003449669.

[7] Schumer pointed out in his book that he is a Jew who reached the highest level any Jew had ever reached in American government when he became U. S. Senate Majority leader in 2021.

[8] Mike Pence, *What Conservatives Believe: Rediscovering the Conservative Conscience* (New York: Center Street, 2026).

[9] While the argument of this paper concerning the valid grounds to critique Israel can be applied to contexts outside of the United States, the focus of this paper is on the American context. This country's long tradition of support for the state of Israel makes consideration of the present problems especially appropriate.

[10] Schumer, ix.

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align with the other minorities pragmatically so that they could work for mutually beneficial social justice.[11] Concerning the state of Israel, Schumer reflects the kind of approach suggested in this paper. He critiqued the state of Israel without lessening the importance of America's support for them. [12] A notable story from his heritage explains why Jews may view the state of Israelis the final area the people can run to if they face antisemitism in their own countries.[13]

Schumer examines the issues on the Right and the Left. Concerning the Right, he sees the bigger problem today as the populist Far Right and white nationalists.[14] These are focused on conspiracies and racism and hatred against anyone else in his view.[15] His discussion focuses on the aspect of hatred.[16] He makes a lot of the indirect support that is gained for the antisemitic cause by supporting ideas like the Great Replacement.[17] On the Left, Schumer sees antisemitism as easier to deal with. In his perspective, the facts are what can overcome the antisemitism of the Left because if they rightly understood the facts they would see Jews as victims just like other groups. He casts such antisemitism using terms of "overboard" and "slip" while critiquing more strongly those antisemites on the right.[18]

Schumer also reflects on the issue of the current Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu.[19] In this discussion, Schumer notes that there was bipartisan support in the past but is concerned about how Netanyahu is aligning too closely with one side to maintain such support. Schumer agreed with Netanyahu in 2019 that the crisis was real concerning Hamas. But he also claimed Netanyhu needed to try to reach both sides of America because the failure of American support was a bigger risk. Schumer demonstrates an agreement that a strong America supportive of Israel is a key issue.

Considering the whole book, the most important insight is to recognize that Schumer is concerned about the result of promoting antisemitism even if the person is not necessarily himself an antisemite. Concerning Donald Trump, Schumer said, "Let me state

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[11] Schumer, 97–98.

[12] Schumer, 176–179.

[13] Schumer, 182.

[14] Schumer, 94–118 but especially note 97–98 and 100. He does note the more old-school variety of making barriers to Jews on 96–97.

[15] He links antisemitism with minorities as a progressive would, whether we're dealing with old-school racism or LGBTQ concerns.

[16] Schumer, 97–98.

[17] This was certainly discussed by Tucker Carlson and Nick Fuentas in their interview. See discussion of this interview below.

[18] On the weaker terminology toward the left, see Schumer, 119.

[19] Schumer, 173.

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unequivocally: I do not believe Donald Trump is an antisemite. But he all too frequently has created the feeling of safe harbor for far-right elements who unbashedly or in coded language express antisemitic sentiments."[20] This perspective is a pragmatic one that may not directly relate to the material questions that can arise concerning the actions of the state of Israel.

Mike Pence considered Israel and America in one main chapter of his book on conservativism.[21] Affirming a robust support for Israel within the conservative tradition,[22] Pence connected the critics of Israel on the Right with isolationism (popularly known as "America First"). He does distinguish, though, being anti-Israel and being an antisemite on the Left and being isolationist and an antisemite on the Right.[23] He also observed correctly that Tucker Carlson calls Christian Zionism heresy.[24] There is far more that unites the conservative Republican Pence and the progressive Democrat Schumer than divides them concerning Israel and America. Such cannot be said for the influencers of the Right.

Influencers on the Right: Carlson and Fuentas

Schumer outlined the strokes of antisemitism on the Left, noting that it was rooted in probelmatic estimations of Israel's guilt according to social justice. This section considers the Right concerning anti-semitism in more detail. Tucker Carlson has emerged as a key critic of Israel in his podcast as a concerned Christian.[25] In October 2025, he had on his podcast Nick Fuentas, a noted America First isolationist who also dabbles in

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[20] Schumer, 106. Leaders and individuals do have a responsibility concerning who they associate with. Within the church context, the doctrine of biblical separation is an example of this instinct (see 1 Cor. 5:9–13 and 2 Cor. 6:14–18). However, the assessment of Schumer is doubtful in light of how critical some on the right, such as Carlson and Fuentas as will be chronicled below, are of Trump on the matter of Israel.

[21] Pence, 223–234.

[22] Pence rightly notes that the conservative movement did have to decisively deal with antisemites in the 1960s. A recent biography of William F. Buckley, Jr., the founder of *National Review* and one of the intellectual leaders of the conservative movement, demonstrates the tension on the Right that eventually was dealt with for a generation. While Buckley's father was a typical figure who did traffic in antisemitism and saw Jews as more likely to be communists, the founder of *National Review* moved from being ambiguous concerning Jews to supporting Israel after the Six Day War of the 1960s. For relevant comments in the recent biography, see Sam Tanenhaus, *Buckley: The Life and the Revolution That Changed America*, Kindle ed. (New York: Random House, 2025), 22, 252, and 732.

[23] Pence, 231. He writes, "As anti-Israel and *even* antisemitic sentiment has taken hold on the progressive left, many right-wing populists have become isolationists who criticize US support for Israel and *even* indulge in age-old conspiracies grounded in antisemitism" (emphasis mine, note the distinguishing of two different categories with the word *even*).

[24] Pence, 232.

[25] It is unclear whether he is an evangelical believer. He maintains his identity as an Episcopalian. However, nothing in my brief survey conclusively demonstrated theological liberalism typical of the recent Episcopalian tradition.

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criticism of Israel.[26] This podcast exploded into more controversy among conservatives after he continued to be platformed by some despite the highly critical rhetoric concerning Israel.[27] In the Fuentas interview, two key ideologies were discussed. The first was the question of free speech, and the second was the philosophy of America First. Fuentas claimed that he was denied free speech for some of his early experiences not necessarily concerning Israel, but his definition may be a misapplication. Some of the contexts when he was "canceled" could have been involving private enterprise. They also equated conservativism with their America First philosophy. Such an identity is hardly clear, but it shows the mindset that looking for our nation's self-interest is the most basic area worthy of preservation. Many social conservatives would argue for many other areas as necessary for conservation. Now, concerning Israel, it is notable that Carlson expressed distress at the suffering at the hands of the needless wars. This concern was one that Schumer expressed too.[28] Both presume that with more negotiations the war could have been avoided. At one point, Carlson did argue that Thomas Aquinas supported the Jews as witness people and having special protections. This reflects that Carlson may not affirm an obvious antisemitism in the line of Adolf Hitler. But, at the same time, Carlson also in this episode used the terminology of identity politics to criticize supporting Israel just because they are ethnic Jews. While identity politics exhibits many problems as a political philosophy, this criticism gets closest to the dispensational impulse to say that we must bless Israel just because they are Israel according to Genesis 12:3.

Since that episode, as the war in Israel has progressed, several comments may be observed in a handful of episodes.[29] After the Israeli strike on Hezbollah in April 2026, he

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[26] Tucker Carlson, host, *Tucker Carlson Interviews Nick Fuentes*, The Tucker Carlson Show, October 27, 2025, https://music.amazon.com/podcasts/2ec63481-d6a6-4cac-b83f-bb9a13c13453/episodes/3bb17483-178d-4461-a7cd-7b37a1ae1345/the-tucker-carlson-show-tucker-carlson-interviews-nick-fuentes.

[27] The Heritage Foundation has played a significant role in the mainstream American conservative movement of Goldwater and Reagan. However, they brought severe criticism on themselves by their decision to have Carlson speak later in 2025 following the Fuentas interview. The Heritage Foundation's plan Project 2025 represented hardly anything different than mainstream ideals of the conservative movement. However, the decision to platform someone so critical of Israel and who associated with someone like Fuentas was highly unusual over the recent era.

[28] E.g., Schumer, xiii, 129.

[29] The episodes I listened to include the following: Tucker Carlson, host, *Tucker Confronts Mike Huckabee on America's Toxic Relationship With Israel*, The Tucker Carlson Show, February 21, 2026, https://music.amazon.com/podcasts/2ec63481-d6a6-4cac-b83f-bb9a13c13453/episodes/d35e0663-5260-4573-8a29-2f209ff23519/the-tucker-carlson-show-tucker-confronts-mike-huckabee-on-america%E2%80%99s-toxic-relationship-with-israel; Tucker Carlson, host, *BREAKING: Netanyahu's Terror Attack on Lebanon Destroys Trump's Ceasefire. Tucker Reacts.*, The Tucker Carlson Show, April 8, 2026, https://music.amazon.com/podcasts/2ec63481-d6a6-4cac-b83f-bb9a13c13453/episodes/0aaa4b98-ddb9-4734-b9fa-ef9bf267023c/the-tucker-carlson-show-breaking-netanyahu%E2%80%99s-terror-attack-on-lebanon-destroys-trump%E2%80%99s-ceasefire-tucker-reacts; and Tucker Carlson, host, *Tucker Responds to the Israel Lobby Defeating Thomas Massie and Killing MAGA*, The Tucker Carlson Show, May 21, 2026,

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used language of "terrorist" to refer to Israel since Beirut is a Christian city according to him. He also took exception of the terminology of "Operation Eternal Darkness" to refer to this operation.[30] A month later, when a current Republican congressman who was not a pro-Israel figure lost his primary, Carlson suggested that Israel is the receiving end of favoritism in a negative sense. The philosophy of America First drove such a criticism. He also pointed to the president's boasts that he has 99% support among Israelis, evidence for Carlson that there is a less than objective basis behind Israeli support. At the heart of these criticisms of Israel from such populists is the perception that America is not doing what it should be doing at home and instead is supporting a state that has taken morally problematic actions and that is unworthy of the kind of support the US is providing it.[31]

While the preceding survey is not exhaustive, the current political moment exhibits this key issue. There are varied ideologies that necessarily interact with the question of the state of Israel. Israel's war against Hamas raises typical questions concerning the basis for war and Israel's methods in this war. While away from the limelight, there are older concerns about Israel's treatment of minorities such as the Maronites.[32] Even the category of the "disputed territories" of the West Bank, Gaza, and the Golan Heights can emerge as questions, though not all are aware of the history or the background.[33] While some in the conversation may not be explicitly Christian (such as Nick Fuentas and Schumer), Christians, including traditional dispensationalists, ought to interact within the questions within their own worldview context.

Defining Antisemitism

In the present political context, defining antisemitism is crucial to establish the terms of discussions about criticisms of the present state of Israel. The concept of antisemitism could fall under the biblical category of partiality in reverse (c.f. Jas. 2:1–4). The Jewish victim is treated in a way that is not consistent with his merits and is punished

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https://music.amazon.com/podcasts/2ec63481-d6a6-4cac-b83f-bb9a13c13453/episodes/e98a09a7-a870-4491-a9fc-77f74d22462c/the-tucker-carlson-show-tucker-responds-to-the-israel-lobby-defeating-thomas-massie-and-killing-maga. These subsequent comments focus on the latter two.

[30] He may mix metaphors by linking the operation name with the biblical texts that speak of "outer darkness." The Jews could have used a Christian text referring to the ultimate judgment of non-Christians to refer ironically to Christians. However, he did not provide evidence that this was intended. The American support for Israel, a Christian nation, points to the unlikelihood of a New Testament reference in this term.

[31] The language of terrorism to describe the attacks on Lebanon was likely the clearest identified instance of antisemitism since it seems inconsistent with a similar act of another nation. See below on the concept of a double standard.

[32] Khalloul, 288–289.

[33] Nicholson, 251.

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for it. Another category is that of simple hatred.[34] However, the political context requires recognition of the way society has considered the idea. Furthermore, the specific historical context of the Jewish experience suggests that more than a mere textbook definition is adequate to communicate the implications of such clean definition. In that light, one should consider the definition from the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA).[35] The core definition is below:

> Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.

The terminology of hatred confirms the prior emphasis noted above. This statement goes further. It attempts to include some scenarios that may not be overtly hatred, but they point to hatred as the more likely form of expression. In addition to this definition, specific contextual examples are given. These include the following:

> Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion.
> Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as collective — such as, especially

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[34] Jews are not the only semitic people. Therefore, the term "Jew-hatred" might be better than antisemitism in this context. For this observation, I am indebted to Kevin Bauder in Foundations Baptist Fellowship, host, *Interview 111: Israel, Palestinian Arabs, and Christian Attitudes*, May 2, 2026, https://proclaimdefend.substack.com/p/interview-111-israel-palestinian. As an example of a Christian Aramean/Syrian who is a Semite but not a Jew, see essay on Israel's treatment of such a minority by Kalloul, 281–301.

[35] International Holocaust Remembrance Association, "Working Definition of Antisemitism," What Is Antisemitism? | IHRA Working Definition, accessed August 6, 2026, https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism. This definition was noted by Schumer, 191. However, he focused on some and not all of the examples without making direct reference to the formal definition. More recently, the definition was formally adopted in June of 2025 by then Mayor Eric Adams of New York City only to be rescinded by his successor Mayor Zohran Mamdani in one of the latter's first official acts; see Executive Order No. 52 (2025), https://www.nyc.gov/assets/home/downloads/pdf/executive-orders/2025/eo-52.pdf and Executive Order No. 1 (2026), https://www.nyc.gov/content/dam/nycgov/mayors-office/downloads/pdf/executive-orders/2026/eo1-prior-executive-orders.pdf. Mayor Mamdani's order rescinded all executive orders over a broad period, but his intent included the explicit removal of the earlier order, see James Genn and Idan Kweller, "NYC Mayor Zohran Mamdani Scraps IHRA Antisemitism Order | The Jerusalem Post," *The Jerusalem Post*, January 2, 2026, https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/article-882099. While a "working definition" only ten years old and one that is not without detractors like Mamdani, the short definition communicates with brevity the essence of antisemitism.

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but not exclusively, the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions.
Accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group, or even for acts committed by non-Jews.
Denying the fact, scope, mechanisms (e.g. gas chambers) or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of National Socialist Germany and its supporters and accomplices during World War II (the Holocaust).
Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust.
Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations.
Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor.
Applying double standards by requiring of it a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.
Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis.
Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.
Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel.

Schumer especially drew attention to the following areas of this definition: (1) conspiracy of success in economic or military efforts, (2) Jews having greater loyalty to Israel, (3) identifying support for Israel with being a Jew, and (4) double standards.[36] The issue of double standards is one of the clearest contemporary examples, as it ties with the biblical concept of partiality. While the definition reflects the conclusions of a fallen world system controlled by "the god of this age" (2 Cor. 4:4),[37] it is possible that these things are an expression of God's common grace reflecting natural law or biblical law. The acceptance of this definition by many countries further points to divine involvement through "the governing authorities, since there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are instituted by God" (Rom. 13:1).[38] The main definition will be assumed throughout to reflect a true concept of antisemitism/Jew-hatred. The

[36] Schumer, 192–194,
[37] Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Christian Standard Bible® and CSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers.
[38] Schumer, 191, notes that forty-five countries use this definition, including the United States.

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contemporary examples will be respected, though it is possible for some nuanced disagreement of their application to different circumstances.[39]

Theological Perspectives Informing Criticism of the State of Israel

Several theological perspectives together point to the possibility for the state of Israel to be criticized without necessarily being antisemitic. These include (1) the eternal gift of the land of Canaan, (2) the possibility of Israel returning to the land before the final acceptance of Messiah, (3) the difference between cursing and criticism, (4) and the example of prophetic criticism.

The Eternal Gift of the Land of Canaan to the People of Israel

The book of Romans concludes its argument for a future salvation of the people of Israel with these words: "[R]egarding election, [Israelites] are loved because of the patriarchs since God's gracious gifts and calling are irrevocable" (Rom. 11:28–29). The phrase "κατὰ…τὴν ἐκλογήν" points to basis for the love that Israel still has from God.[40] This love based on election is explained by the permanent nature of those things given to Israel. The entire section on Israel begins with a summary list of the "gracious gifts and calling" (Rom. 9:4–5). While the land of Israel is not specifically named in this list, "the covenants" and "the promises" would one way or the other include the land. Each of the major covenants made with Israel include something pertaining to the land.[41] The promises, viewed as a more general term, can include any number of the promises to Israel that concern what will happen to them if they live faithfully in the land (e.g., Deut. 15:4–5).

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[39] As "contemporary examples" according to the group that formed this definition, such examples may require interaction to defend why they are an expression of actual hatred. Two examples are noteworthy. First, the concept of stereotypes is not inherently wrong as long as they are treated as generalities to be tested against individuals with sensitivity. But even on this point, the example describes these things as "mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations." Especially important is the question of falsehood indicated in the term *mendacious*. Second, some question whether "contemporary Israeli policy" is that of an aggressor like a nation such as the Nazis though Israel would surely not be targeting Jews. This point does not reflect antagonism toward the consensus that this list represents.

[40] BDAG, s.v. "κατά," classifies this usage of the preposition as "denoting relationship to something, with respect to, in relation to."

[41] On the Abrahamic, see Gen. 15:7–21. On the Mosaic Covenant, the entire system assumes a land which the Abrahamic descendants did not have either by virtue of their forefather Abraham or by inheritance until they were already on their way to Egypt. Similarly, the Land Covenant (if it is distinguished from the Mosaic) assumes a people who would be in a specific land and foretells a future return to that same land (Deut. 30:5). The Davidic Covenant promises "a place" (Hb. מָקוֹם) for the people to live in, not just a place for the temple or king (2 Sam. 7:10; c.f., Jer. 7:3, 7 where the interplay of both place as a land and the "place" of the temple are found.) On the New Covenant, Jeremiah also uses place with "Judah's cities and Jerusalem's streets" (Jer. 33:10). On the use of מָקוֹם in this way, see *NIDOTTE*, s.v. "קוּם."

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The significance of the land is also supported by the Gospel of Matthew and the books of Luke and Acts. From the Gospel of Matthew, several points emerge.[42] One argument is the overtones of the "land" in certain key texts such as the Lord's prayer concerning the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 6:10). Willitts translates it, "On the land as it is in heaven," suggesting a referent to the land of Israel not the earth generically. The common English translation of "earth" could be seen as a "false friend," a word that sounds like something we know but in fact is not referring to what we think it means.[43] The context of the Sermon on the Mount as an Israel-focused discourse given the context of the kingdom of heaven offer would suggest such a conclusion.[44] Additionally, the references to Jerusalem in Matthew support a continuing concern for the land. The land is implied through the concern shown for Jerusalem as "the holy city" (Matt. 4:5 and 27:53)[45] and the Lord lamenting over it while implying it will be redeemed in the future.[46] Additionally, the promise concerning the future even in the Beatitude of "they shall inherit the land" (Matt. 5:5, translation by Willitts) points to a future inheritance of the land in some respect. The distinction between the final commission to the apostles that involves all the earth in the post-crucifixion era (Matt. 28:19–20) and the earlier commission just to Israel (Matt. 10:5–6) supports a potential referent in the Sermon on the Mount that is also Israel focused. Willitts's argument has enough to hold that the land remains a concern for Matthew.[47]

Luke–Acts also demonstrates the concern of the land in connection to Israel for the gospel author's concern for Jerusalem.[48] The text of Acts 1:6–8 implies the future

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[42] Joel Willitts, "Zionism in the Gospel of Matthew: Do the People of Israel and the Land of Israel Persist as Abiding Concerns for Matthew?" in McDermott, *The New Christian* Zionism, 107–140.

[43] Mark Ward, *Authorized: The Use & Misuse of the King James Bible*, ed. Elliot Ritzema, Lynnea Fraser, and Danielle Thevenaz (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 31. He applies this concept between an older and a newer Bible translation. In this case, the argument is that both old and new translations using the traditional reading of "earth" are a false friend.

[44] Willitts's larger point is conceded that Matthew has a "turfed kingdom," see especially Willitts, 124–128 However, some caution is needed as some texts could clearly expand view to the entire physical earth even in connection with heaven (e.g. Matt. 11:25; 16:19; 18:18–19; 23:35). The two texts concerning the keys of the kingdom fit here because they concern Israel alongside the church. An exclusively Israelite context is needed for this point. The context of the Sermon of the Mount and other similar texts is what gives this point its validity.

[45] While the first reference is from the mouth of Satan, the second reference is in the mouth of Matthew as it pertains to where the saints are raised from the dead after Jesus dies. The latter text may present its own questions for some as to its historicity, but such is beyond the scope of concern for this section.

[46] Matthew 23:37–39 says, "[Jerusalem] will not see me again until [she says], 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord'")

[47] Willitts argues along seven lines, some stronger than others. Those mentioned from his chapter here were deemed the strongest.

[48] Mark S. Kinzer, "Zionism in Luke—Acts: Do the People of Isael and the Land of Israel Persist as Abiding Concerns in Luke's Two Volumes?" in McDermott, *New Christian Zionism*, 141—165. This paragraph draws from his essay.

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restoration of the kingdom of Israel.[49] This interpretation is supported by other indicators within the two volumes. For example, though the book of Acts follows a progressive outline towards "the ends of the earth," the story routinely returns to Jerusalem, a city in the land.[50] The concluding words of Paul that affirm present Israel's rejection of Christ and the turn toward the Gentiles do not deny a future for Israel that is implied elsewhere (Acts 28:23–28). The ending of Acts communicates "a new judgment…and a new exile."[51] An exile is not permanent removal due to the pattern of the first exile. Other indicators that point to a future for Israel in the land. Structurally, the well-known narrative in the center of the gospel of Luke points to the importance of Jerusalem (Luke 9:51ff). The references to Israel and Jerusalem in the characters of Simeon and Anna in the opening birth narrative highlight concerns of Israel and Jerusalem (2:25, 32, 34, 38).[52] Luke 21:24 tacitly implies a restoration for Jerusalem after the times of the Gentiles in this uniquely Lukan text ("**until** the Times of the Gentiles are fulfilled," emphasis mine). The overall message of Luke–Acts is a future for Jerusalem that implies the future for Israel in its ancestral land.

The gift of the land to Israel is part of the things that can never be taken away from them based on God's election of them and the covenants he established with them. Without regard to the precise circumstances in which the nation is established, this gift implies that they are always entitled to it, even if they are put out of it by the providence of God. While the two millennia preceding the return of Israel in 1948 may have been a much longer exile than before, the pattern was established. Their return in the post-exilic period demonstrates that in such periods Israel never loses the entitlement to the land. For the dispensationalist, the contemporary example of denying Israel's right to exist is a valid basis upon which to judge antisemitism.[53]

The Possibility of a Divinely Predicted Return of Israel in Unbelief

A related theological perspective concerns a timeline in which Israel is divinely predicted to return to the land in unbelief. The view that the return of 1948 was

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[49] Dispensationalists typically argue for this text's relevance to the question of Israel's future, see for example David Criswell, "The Times of the Gentiles," in *Dispensationalism Tomorrow & Beyond: A Theological Collection in Honor of Charles C. Ryrie*, Logos ed., ed. Christopher Cone (Ft. Worth, TX: Tyndale Seminary Press, 2008), 266–67. However, such an interpretation is also objectional to others such as Gary Burge as discussed by Kinzer, 141–143.
[50] Kinzer, 145.
[51] Kinzer, 158–161, quotation from 161.
[52] Kinzer, 151. Note that Anna in Luke 2:38 refers specifically to the "redemption of Jerusalem." This city cannot be redeemed unless it returns to some element concerning its former (Israelite) glory.
[53] This theological argument is not the only basis to defend this right. See section below on international law and natural law considerations.

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prophetically significant led to some date setting.[54] This perspective may have only heightened a sense that the divine return implied divine blessing immediately. This implied conclusion was not warranted, but it further points to the need to consider the present return as prophetic fulfillment.[55]

The programmatic text concerning Israel is Daniel 9:24–27. The prophet is told, "Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city" (9:24). The purposes of this period include the establishment of Israel as a holy people, suggesting the fullest experience possible of the blessing promised to them. This timeline concerning Israel supports an approach to imminency that includes both the Lord's return and the coming wrath of the Tribulation.[56] Daniel 9 permits the impression that the covenant between Antichrist and Israel is how the nation is re-established within the land.[57] The prophecy presents the seventy weeks of years as the final period in which God is detailing with the nation. However, the existence of the state of Israel as a group before the covenant is established is also a possibility.[58] Some flexibility must be admitted since the fulfillment of the destruction of Jerusalem after Messiah's death also occurs outside the seventy weeks of years strictly speaking (Dan. 9:26). More importantly, Daniel demonstrates the state of unbelief until the seventy weeks are finished. The references to the people's sin and absence of righteousness imply that the people are not worthy of God's blessing until the end of the seventy weeks. The point is no different than Romans 11:23 as it tacitly admits they "remain in unbelief." The hardening of Israel is also important to account for, as is

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[54] For a short summary of the history that involved a round of date-setting tied to Israel's rebirth and the length of a generation, see John F. Hart, ed., *Evidence for the Rapture: A Biblical Case for Pretribulationism* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2015), 17–19.

[55] Understanding that Israel could not have been reborn without God's involvement is not the question at hand. God can work a "modern-day miracle," Louis A. Barberi, Jr., "The Future for Israel in God's Plan," in *Essays in Honor of J. Dwight Pentecost*, ed. Stanley D. Toussaint and Charles H. Dyer (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 164; and the "intervention of God" can be absolutely necessary for the present state of Israel to be in the land, see Khalloul, 285. However, neither of these affirmations require divine prediction of this return, or this return having an explicit role in the divine timeline.

[56] See Robert L. Thomas, "The Rapture and the Biblical Teaching of Imminency," in Hart, *Evidence for the Rapture*, 23–43, on the dual imminency concept.

[57] On this idea, I heard it suggested by Kevin Bauder, guest, *Interview 111: Israel, Palestinian Arabs, and Christian Attitudes*. However, I have not located the idea argued in print in quite this way. The implication may be that the Israelites are needy at the time of this covenant's establishment, see Charles H. Ray, "Daniel 9:24–27 Considered, Part II," in *Dispensationalism Tomorrow & Beyond: A Theological Collection in Honor of Charles C. Ryrie*, Logos ed., ed. Christopher Cone (Ft. Worth, TX: Tyndale Seminary Press, 2008), 333, who cites J. Dwight Pentecost for this observation. What condition could be more needy than for Israel to not even have a homeland, as was observed by Schumer earlier?

[58] The prophecy also supports that Israel had to be in the land before the covenant is established, as is done by John Walvoord according to Fruchtenbaum, 499.

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taught in many texts in the New Testament (e.g., the previously mentioned ending of the book of Acts). At best, this text fits indirectly with a regathering in unbelief.

For evidence of a predicted regathering in unbelief, Fruchtenbaum uses a handful of texts from Ezekiel. These include Ezekiel 20:33–38, 22:17–22, and 36:22–24.[59] The key to this understanding is that the people need to face the purifying judgment of God, and that this cannot be directly related to the regathering associated with the Tribulation. If these texts suggest that the people must be purified through this initial regathering in the land, then the present situation of the state of Israel must be linked with coming under something like the curses of Deuteronomy 28–30. Present economic prosperity is wrongly identified as a fulfillment of the Abrahamic blessing. Likewise, identifying the judgment of God on the group currently regathered seems exceedingly difficult to identify beyond the judgment of God that has been on Israel since its rejection of its Messiah, Yeshua.[60]

While the presence of Israel in the land could be a fulfillment of prophetic expectations, the prophecy of Daniel's 70th week focuses on the future Tribulation as the key period of God's dealing with Israel. Even if Israel is in the land by direct divine action in fulfillment of God's timeline or by indirect divine providence, they remain subject to God's judgment as people who reject their Messiah. They cannot be treated as people who are under God's blessing, and at a popular level this point is what is sometimes missed. The present situation presents the opportunity to consider the Abrahamic blessing on Israel.

The Distinction Between Criticism and Cursing

Dispensationalists rightly point to the promise of the Abrahamic Covenant as a key matter concerning one's posture toward Israel. "I will bless those who bless you, I will curse anyone who treats you with contempt" (Gen. 12:3).[61] In this original form of the covenant, the first four clauses concern Abraham, and the last three concern others. Only the latter clauses have anything to do with ethics or antisemitism in the present. Two other texts in the Torah take this covenant forward beyond Abraham first to Jacob (Gen. 27:29, by

[59] *Israelology*, 716–718.
[60] While such judgment of God would not be antisemitic, one could see that this idea would be easily used by those who may be hyper-active in criticizing Israel all in the name of them "facing God's judgment." If this is the true timeline, significant caution must be taken in applying this idea to evaluation of present Israel.
[61] Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, Logos ed., 8 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1993), 4:314, called it "the abiding divine principle in connection with Israel upon which God deals with Gentile nations as such[.]"

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Isaac) and then to the nation (Num. 24:9, spoken by the prophet Baalam to Balak).[62] These three texts exhibit differences in lexemes used and phraseology.

Genesis 12:3 uses the verb בָּרַךְ to communicate the positive reaction to Abraham and his descendants of blessing, using plural form to refer to those acting concerning Israel. There is most uniformity across all three texts in the use of this lexeme and this specific form (מְבָרְכֶיךָ, a participle in the Piel stem). Within the Torah, the comparision of this Abrahamic blessing and the original creation's blessing makes sense (Gen. 1:22,28; 2:3).[63] The contrast between blessing and curse also finds parallel with the earlier section (Gen. 3:14,17; 5:29; c.f., Gen. 4:11).[64] In the context of the ancient world with proper acknowledgement of the Torah's monotheistic context, it is appropriate to note that the blessing of deity is of the utmost importance.[65] The positive promise presents a properly pragmatic motivation for people to treat Israel favorable.[66] Israel's neighbors may bless her through concrete acts of good will or in wishing God to bless them. However, the element of cursing cannot be ignored either.[67]

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[62] Claus Westermann, *A Continental Commentary: Genesis 12-36*, Logos ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1985), 150—151, notes these two texts as the closest parallels. He observed a possible implication of protection implied int he concepts of "blessing" or "cursing" which could have some application to a war context.

[63] Tremper Longman, III, *How to Read Genesis*, Logos ed. (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 2005), 128–129.

[64] The term *similarity* is used intentionally to point out that there is not a necessary identification between God's plan for Abraham and his plan for Adam and Eve. Theirs was worldwide, his is to a narrower scope.

[65] Willem VanGemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, Logos ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 1:758, hereafter abbreviated as NIDOTTE.

[66] The natural law tradition included in the Declaration of Independence observes that one right that is "self-evident" is the "pursuit of [one's own] happiness." On this point, note Robert P. George and Andrew T. Walker, "Afterword: Seeking the Truth, Speaking the Truth; A Dialogue between Robert P. George and Andrew T. Walker," in *Social Conservativism for the Common Good: A Protestant Engagement with Robert P. George*, ePub ed., ed. Andrew T. Walker (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2023), loc. 6632-6667. Walker describes the American ideals, including the Declaration of Independence and this promise as rooted in the "Aristotelian-Thomistic" moral tradition, natural law. George cites Jefferson as not only describing the declaration as "self-evident" but also that it is "the common sense of the subject," and the implication there is of natural law as deduced by proper moral reasoning. Even Jesus to some degree admits this when he compares our moral duty for one another to our one's own self-interest ("love your neighbor as yourself," Matt. 22:39). See below for further remarks on natural law.

[67] Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *God's Kingdom through God's Covenants: A Concise Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 102—103, place far too great an emphasis on the blessing aspect, claiming that the message of the promise of Abraham is intended to remove the curse of the earlier chapters. In the context of their approach, note the relevance of the curse in Gordon J. Wenham, "Genesis," in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, 4th. ed., ed. D. A. Carson et al. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 70 and Allen P. Ross, "Genesis," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, Logos ed., vol. 1, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1985), 47.

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Two lexemes are used to refer to cursing in the three instances of this promise of cursing. These include קלל and ארר. In Genesis 12:3, קלל is used in the Piel stem, but in Genesis 27:29 and Numbers 24:9 the Qal stem of ארר. While all three instances use a singular masculine object, the referent of Numbers 24:9 is a collective singular since Baalam is speaking to Israel as a group ("How beautiful are your tents, Jacob, your dwellings, Israel," Num. 24:5).[68] The combination of both the individual application concerning patriarchs and the collective application to the group suggests a broad application for these promises that is independent of the existence of the nation-state of Israel but that certainly applies to the nation.

The meaning of the term *curse* does not avoid theological overtone, even in modern times.[69] However, the context of the biblical text is certainly theological. The Hebrew קלל does can have sense of someone being "lightly esteemed" alongside to "be despised, be viewed with contempt" in the Qal stem. In Genesis 12:3, the verb occurs in the Piel stem where it is more of a generic "[to] curse."[70] Because this term is a synonym with ארר, merging analysis of both terms is appropriate. The fear of judgment is implied in the concept of a curse concerning this latter term.[71]

Applied to Israel, they are in danger of facing the curse of ארר if they violate the covenant according to Deuteronomy 27–28. The promises of blessing are also found in the Deuteronomy text, pointing to the conditional nature of Israel being blessed. Chafer himself points to the moral dimension of cursing concerning the Abrahamic Covenant. He observed concerning this curse that, "judgment falls on those who afflict Israel and simply because they do it maliciously nonetheless."[72] What if a person criticizes Israel without

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[68] Chafer, 4:139, sees the Abrahamic promise as the basis of Matthew 25:31–46 and its judgment. That text begins with τὰ ἔθνη (Matt. 25:32) as the subject of those facing judgment. The term would seem to be naturally a collective term, but the second person plurals used in the subsequent with refers to very specific actions suggest individuals are in view. The context of the Tribulation wherein nations as a whole are opposed to Israelites suggests that individuals are in view here too. This interpretation would focus on individuals who may bless or curse either individual Israelites or national Israel. However, the possibility of a nation cursing Israel at this time is not out of bounds.

[69] Merriam-Webster, Inc., *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, Logos ed (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003), s.v., "[1]curse," "[2]curse," and "cursed." The noun form includes a reference to divine action in two of the five definitions, and only one of them refers to a more generic reference to "harm or misfortune." The verb form also includes a reference to God in two of the four definitions (treating sub-definitions as separate ones). The common thread, whether initiated by God or not, is verbal and physical harm that is sought or actualized on another.

[70] David J. A. Clines, ed., *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, Logos ed. (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press; Sheffield Phoenix Press, 1993), s.v. "קלל," hereafter abbreviated as DCH. Ross, 47, commenting on this text, appears to latch on to the idea of "who would treat him lightly." However, such may not be the best gloss on the concept in light of the stem used.

[71] NIDOTTE, 1:525.

[72] Chafer, 4:313.

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pronouncing a curse of harm on them? The categories are different, and one can criticize a friend without malice (e.g., Prov. 27:6). The term *curse* is a strong term that invokes ill-will on them, likely motivated by hatred that is not called for in light of the definition of antisemitism adopted here. While one may act in accordance with invoking ill-will, the emphasis on one's heart seems to be at the fore as expressed in what one asks another (viz., God) to do against Israel.

The Abrahamic curse of Genesis 12:3 is extended to Jacob and the entire nation. It applies to cursing against both individual Israelites and the nation. The texts focus on the actors. An individual or nation can indeed fall under the curse.[73] Israel may be worthy of a curse, but Scripture presents God as the primary agent in putting the nation temporarily under the curse. God uses the nations' own predisposition of hatred to accomplish his persons, but they remain guilty themselves of the cursing. It could include for some a wish that God would do them direct harm and withhold his blessing, which God did do. However, cursing refers to a stronger attitude than merely pointing out the wrongs someone may have done in dispassionate criticism.[74] This point is enlightened by a consideration of the prophets' own preaching against Israel in canonical Scripture.

The Example of Prophetic Criticism

The working definition of antisemitism used this paper focuses on manifestations of hatred against Jews that includes words or actions. This definition is careful to distinguish the acts of the state of Israel from individual Jews outside that nation. However, during the Old Testament biblical period, the Jews are primarily in the land, and such a distinction has less relevance. The critiques of the prophets are worth examination to demonstrate how men who happen to be spokespersons of God can criticize Israel. While their cases are informed by covenantal concerns more than the kind of examples in the present paper's

[73] Are there limits in the degree of which this is applicable during the intercalation of the church? Such is doubtful, but the timing is not always immediate. See Fruchtenbaum, 581, and Wenham, 56. The sheep and goats judgment of Matthew 25 could not be the ultimate fulfillment for this since only a small part of human history will experience that. The final judgment may be required as with many similar areas of divine justice. The identification of a curse and being under judgment permits the invocation of the final judgment in this way.

[74] This point has focused on the sense of cursing as not prohibiting criticism. However, the idea of blessing also can meet this kind of distinction through general good will toward another that does not necessitate approval of all they do. Matthew 25:34–40 communicates an example where one was blessing Israel through legitimate assistance when they were needy. It is an expression of general goodwill. The concepts of blessing and its counterpart exhibit complexities beyond the requirements for the present argument.

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definition of antisemitism, they inform the possibility for someone to critique without cursing.[75]

The most significant prophets on social justice include Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, and Micah.[76] This section will focus on Amos for insights, since ”[n]owhere in the OT is the issue of social justice a more focused matter of concern.”[77] Amos’s preaching was “direct, vivid, and hard-hitting.”[78] Amos was a prophet especially to Israel in the reign of Jeroboam II (Amos 1:1). The Book of Kings notes that in his time Israel’s borders expanded, and this situation communicates a likelihood of economic gain resulting from it.[79] The reasonable deduction is that there was great prosperity in the land, and hints of such prosperity may lie behind some of Amos’s criticisms.[80] While Amos at times focuses on the religious dimensions of Israel’s problems,[81] such matters are less relevant to present antisemitism.

While Amos never preaches against Israel for its territorial expansion, he does speak of terrible warfare (war crimes?) undertaken by Damascus against Israel (1:3). Given the degree of preaching of Amos against Israel in other areas, there is little basis to presume that Israel is immune from such criticism had they committed things analogous to what Damascus did. However, the point is not as explicit since there is no specific instance of a critic of Israel for such deeds.[82]

A survey of the book of Amos identifies a handful of noteworthy social criticisms, some more and some less relevant to the charge of antisemitism. All, however, demonstrate under the right circumstances criticisms are indeed possible without

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[75] The matter of social justice may not relate one to one with the definition of antisemitism, but social justice is a major concern of the antisemitism of the left that is under examination. The most relevant parallels of the working definition example is the injustice implicit in the application of “double standards.” A prophetic critique of Israel as an oppressor against other nations could fall under the example of accusing Israel of Nazi-like policies. However, my research did not surface any examples of that nature. The Syro-Ephramite War where the northern Kingdom and Syria attacked Judah in an oppressive manner could have triggered prophetic critique along this line, but I did not discover any. In some respects, more important is to show how criticism is possible toward Israel if it is true (c.f. the contemporary example of “mendacious…allegations about Jews,” which among other things focuses on the patently false claims made against Jews).

[76] M. D. Carroll R., “Ethics,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets*, Logos ed., ed. Mark J. Boda and J. Gordon McConville, The IVP Bible Dictionary Series (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2013), 185.

[77] B. P. Irwin, “Social Justice,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets*, 726.

[78] D. N. Premnath, “Amos and Hosea: Sociohistorical Background and Prophetic Critique,” *Word & World* 28, no. 2 (2008): 132.

[79] Premnath, 126.

[80] Premnath, 127. J. Daniel Hays, *Message of the Prophets: A Survey of the Prophetic and Apocalyptic Books of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 287, calls the target group of some of Amos’s critiques as a “decadent wealthy class (both men and women).”

[81] Joanna M. Hoyt, *Amos, Jonah, & Micah*, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 7.

[82] Israel then was not insecure in the way it is today, see Amos 6:1 on their security at this time.

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antisemitism. The most notable area of criticism concerns oppression against the poor, especially of an economic variety. The term עָשַׁק ("to oppressor") can refer to scenarios where "[t]he primary purpose of the oppressor is to accumulate wealth that is only attainable by exploiting and robbing one's neighbor."[83] This gets closer to the kind of financial antisemitism that historically was given against Israel, because Jews were so prudent with money. Amos 3:9 mentions "the acts of oppression within [Samaria]." It is not just economic oppression. It can be accompanied by violence (3:10). Various indicators of the wealth of these oppressors have been identified within Amos.[84] The clearest instance appears to be the refers to the "winter house and the summer house," God promising to destroy them (3:15). Even today, people frequently know that people who have enough money to have two homes are wealthy. However, caution must prevail. Even the definition of antisemitism observes that people have wrongly used Jewish wealth as the basis for antisemitism. But in the mouth of the prophet, speaking for God, there is utmost accuracy. Humans can aspire to sufficient accuracy, but the context of antisemitism should provoke significant caution. Amos addresses other financial matters. He noted the enslaving of people at an inappropriately low value for the context (2:6–7 and 8:6). He also referred to the practice of selling the crumbs of food ("chaff") and seemingly acting like it is the more substantive area (8:5).[85] Finally, he also notes the taking of bribes (5:12). The corruption of justice associated with the taking of bribes is a persistent concern and can tie in with antisemitism rooted in Jewish financing. However, such criticisms must only be based on proper evidence.

Amos also addresses other faults on the part of the people. These include sexual issues that may be closer to covenantal concerns (Amos 2:7). He also observes that powerful people hate the righteous people alongside the poor. He may single out women even in a rare case of the weaker, typically oppressed, women being the oppressors (4:1).[86] He also points out the arrogance of the people which can apply to military concerns (6:8).

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[83] *NIDOTTE*, 3:557.

[84] For a representative sample, see Premnath, 128–131. There is a hint of anachronism in some of these admittedly mainstream readings of Amos. However, the overall point that there was excessive wealth seems appropriate.

[85] While the recent idea of "shrinkflation" may be less deceptive in the fine print, there is a parallel in this prophetic criticism for any business to consider.

[86] The "most straightforward" reading is that the "cows of Bashan" are women, see Daniel M. R. Carroll, *The Book of Amos*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, ed. Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020), 248. However, Hoyt, 132—134 and 137—141, exhaustively covers the complex interpretive issues without coming down clearly on whether it is a reference to the people generally or women specifically.

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The results of Amos's critique of the people are also instructive since in a sense he wishes for harm to the people—He warns of the nation of Israel coming to an end (e.g., 5:27; 7:17)! As noted, Israel may be in the land now in fulfillment of prophecy. However, before the Messianic kingdom begins, there was a time in the past when Israel was in the land and kicked out for a specific reason. Is not present Israel in a "lesser" relationship to God without the theocracy and thus more liable to face a providential turn that could be analogous to an exile?[87] God warns Israel that they will lose the houses and produce they have because of their injustice. If present Israel is guilty of such injustice, could they not suffer the consequences too in a manner appropriate to their present context? Yet, unlike antisemites, God's criticism of Israel in the book of Amos are restorative (4:6,10). This parallels New Testament when it speaks of making Israel "jealous" so they would seek him (Rom. 11:11,14).

Amos writes in a covenantal context in which Israel is expected and required to live faithfully both religiously and socially. The failures of the people are serious and face strict verbal and actual judgments. However, such criticisms and even physical destruction have no antisemitism in them. They are entirely truthful; they are entirely just without double standards.[88] Amos also implies the seriousness of mercy in war through his criticism of harsh war practices of Damascus. If the nation of Israel is genuinely corrupt in its treatment of people, harsh in its war practices, then could she face a similar providential turn? It would seem like yes.

Summary Conclusions from Theology

While the issues concerning the state of Israel today are of a non-covenantal nature in light of its unbelief, the example of the book of Amos and other prophets confirms that issues can be raised by people in accordance with truth and justice against the present state of Israel. While the land was given to them, prior to 1948 God saw fit to exile them for far longer than the first exile. He chose to bring them back into the land as people entitled to the land but also equally in rebellion against Yeshua, her Messiah. The absence of the glory (Rom. 9:4) points to the absence of this blessing. Therefore, true and righteous criticisms can be raised against the present nation-state of Israel without cursing and in consistency with their present place as inhabitants of the land as unbelieving people. The promise of the Abrahamic covenant remains sure that God will bless those who bless Israel considering their own merits or the acceptance of the truth that God has a unique

[87] The state of Israel today has no relationship to her God at all. She is there in unbelief.
[88] Note that the book begins with criticisms of other nations alongside Israel and Judah. This is not consistent with the double standards of antisemites as outlined in the IHRA definition.

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plan for them. The question of their own merits leads to considerations outside of theology and that is two "laws" that have meaning outside of a distinctly Christian or Jewish context.

The Application of International Law and Natural Law Outside a Religious Context

The preceding theological foundations demonstrate the essential validity of the state of Israel facing critiques without such critiques necessarily being antisemitic. However, some categories are rejected by secular people who may have little place for a theistic framework. Even if someone holds to a theistic worldview, as they should (Rom. 1:18–20; Psa. 19:1–5), discussions about the state of Israel may be secular. Some Christians did argue for the right of Israel's existence, for example, by appeal to non-theological categories.[89] This does not leave the state out of the sphere of God, but the rules of engagement differ.[90] The fact that Israel is a nation-state in a context that at times involves secular people point to a role for considering the proper use of natural law available to all people and international law. These two types of law outside of strictly covenantal law in Scripture demonstrate the way that Israel may face just scrutiny for various actions.

The natural law tradition broadly considered originated with Thomas Aquinas in medieval scholasticism.[91] The most basic biblical evidence for this natural law is the revelation of right and wrong in man's conscience, but more can be said than just this.[92] Andrew T. Walker defines natural law as "the moral tradition in Christian thought that a divinely inscribed and self-evident moral order of basic norms and goods exists that human agents—though fallen—can still, in principle, grasp as a function of their nature as they reflect reasonably and conscientiously upon their choices and their reasons for

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[89] Reinhold Niehbur is an example of those who may operate in this space, see Robert Benne, "Theology and Politics: Reinhold Niebuhr's Christian Zionism," in *The New Christian Zionism*, 221–48. According to that essay, Niehbur gave reasons that sound like natural law though on occasion did use more theological language, see Benne, 227-228 and 232-233.

[90] The concept is explained through various things, such as "creation ordinances" or "biblical institutions." A newer category is "social ontology," see Paul Miles, "Refuting Ruscism: A Critique from Biblical Social Ontology" (Liberty University, 2026), https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/8522.

[91] Andrew T. Walker, *Faithful Reason: Natural Law Ethics for God's Glory and Our Good* (Brentwood, Tennessee: B&H Academic, 2024), 383. Walker represents a Baptist and Protestant perspective. While not dispensational, he is representative of this tradition that historically was marked by Roman Catholics. While dispensationalists may historically be more sympathetic with the evangelical critics of natural law, there is no intrinsic conflict between the two areas. Natural law is arguably the way to argue for Christian morality in public without arguing for Christian nationalism which typically includes theonomy.

[92] The inclusion of natural revelation suggests that the concept of right and wrong cannot conflict with special revelation. This law is rightly understood as revelation, though it can be misunderstood like the Bible as special revelation can also be misunderstood. That the earlier special revelation showed the possibility of criticism points to the path presented herein as a way forward.

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action."[93] As such, the universality of natural law enables arguments about what is right and wrong between individuals who may share no common religious commitment. A brief defense of the concept from Scripture by Walker includes the concepts of order, morality, and justice (Gen. 1–2; 9:6; Matt. 7:12; Mark 12:31; and Rom. 2:14–16).[94] As applied to question of Israel, many areas of basic right and wrong could be marshalled in defense of or in accusation of the state of Israel.[95]

While natural law includes issues of the basic right to life for all people, especially the most vulnerable, the present circumstances present the concept of just war theory as particularly relevant. Few in the present debate concerning Israel would identify with pacificism or totalitarian warfare. Those two poles leave primarily the concept of war under just circumstances. Paul D. Miller observes, "Just war thinking often relies on appeals to natural law[.]"[96] Such appeals will have relevance everywhere without appeal to theology. Walker does not spend a lot of time on the subject in *Faithful Reason*, but a few items may be noted.[97] He notes this tradition is linked to a more basic right to self-defense. He observes using reason that pacifism may fail to love one's neighbor. As a result, some circumstances require a nation to defend itself. However, war presents many questions of facts and the application of those facts. This complexity points to the need for this other avenue to examine the state of Israel's actions.[98] Their connections with other nation-state actors, such as the United States, further demonstrate the complex nature of considering what they are doing.[99] The public is where some of the criticisms of Israel are coming, and

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[93] Andrew T. Walker, "The Natural Law Tradition and Baptist Public Ethics," in *Baptist Political Theology*, Logos ed., ed. Thomas S. Kidd, Paul D. Miller, and Andrew T. Walker (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2023), 527.

[94] "The Natural Law Tradition," 531–537. For a more complete discussion of Walker's development of the subject, see Walker, *Faithful Reason*. While people may deny the scriptural argument for natural law, because special revelation informs us it exists, we are entitled to appeal to it without any reference to the underlying proof for it.

[95] Romans 2:15 similarly observes the contrast between accusation or excusing.

[96] "Just War and Baptist Political Theology," in *Baptist Political Theology*, 669–670. He includes a brief summary of the history of just war across various theological traditions.

[97] 271–272.

[98] Notably, Israel faces this the past concerning the past when critics of Scripture point to the so-called genocide of the Canaanites. In that case, Christians possess an inerrant record of those wars, and the evaluation of Israel's actions can and have been discerned through various studies; note the recent dissertation on the subject by Jordan P. Ballard, "The Kindness and Severity of God: A Defense of the Conquest of Canaan" (Liberty University, 2022), https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/3815. Ballard's argument focuses on the theological justification for the Canaanite war in light of the God's just punishment of the Canaanites and God's good plan to use Israel to execute that judgment. Present Israel, being in unbelief, possesses no similar justification.

[99] The complexity is observed by even Schumer, 189–190. The ethical theory of graded absolutism is not synonymous with natural law, though Aquinas did use the concept see Norman L. Geisler, *Thomas Aquinas: An Evangelical Appraisal*, Kindle Edition. Second Edition, Revised & Expanded (n.p.: Bastion Books, 2025),

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thus they need to be dealt on this basis. The natural law provides a basis upon which to examine the merits of Israel's actions without resorting to explicitly disputed religious considerations.

In addition to natural law, complex international law is also a basis to rightly accuse or approve Israel's actions. International law is complex and not always binding, but it has a role for consideration.[100] International law includes: (1) voluntary rules, (2) lack of enforcement, (3) change over time, (4) arbitrariness, (5) enacted by governments among themselves, and (6) to some degree indefinite.[101] Since there is no single world government, the provisions of international law express rules which have been agreed on to differing degrees. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of antisemitism may be viewed under this category considering its indefiniteness and voluntariness. Israel cannot afford to ignore this concept, since the early Zionist movement and the subsequent creation of Israel was rooted in the treaties of nations involved, treaties that are rooted in if not directly a part of the international law.[102] While lending support for Israel's existence in consideration of the nation states who had possessed the land before, there may be other areas that could be considering. The range of actual stipulations that may be binding may not be as clear or broad, but there are bases to examine them.

In the end, these publicly accessible frameworks of natural law and international law are appropriate bases for examining the actions of the state of Israel where they do not contradict justice as revealed in special revelation. To treat Israel unlike other nations in the realms of natural law and international law would be unjust.[103] The challenge for all

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254–256. However, the theory fits well with natural law to consider these complexities. In this view, certain ethical rules may conflict and that only by recognizing certain principles as more important may such conflicts be resolved. Jesus himself may support this theory with a reference to "the more important matters of the law" (Matt. 23:23). For a more complete summary of this ethical theory with relevant interaction of the other logically systems, see Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Ethics: Contemporary Issues & Options*, Second Edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 97–115.

[100] The natural law that includes justice suggests nations who enter treaties among themselves should fulfill such agreements. In addition, the just war theory of natural law finds relevance to international law in the areas in which international law touches on the proper basis for war.

[101] Note explanation of the concept in Nicholson, 260–264

[102] Darrell L. Bock, "Israel's Future as a Nation and Reconciliation," in *The Future Restoration of Israel: A Response to Supersessionism*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Alan E. Kurschner, McMaster Biblical Studies Series, Vol. 10 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2023), 102, notes this idea back to the founding of Israel starting with the Balfour Declaration. Nicholson, 265–279, demonstrates the rights granted to Israel to the "disputed territories" after the Six-Day War of 1967 in light of international law.

[103] Bock, 102, summarizes the kind of concerns that must inform an evaluation of Israel's presence in the land while affirming their theological entitlement to it. His concerns include both categories of international and natural law.

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involved remains to uncover the truth, and to righteously discern. The natural law and international law provide further standards which all nations must be subject to, and such can be used in discussions apart from explicitly theistic concerns while relying on God's existence for their validity.

Conclusion

Israel can do wrong things, just like any other nation-state. There are many different criticisms that are uncalled for and may be undertaken by people who give evidence that they maliciously hate the Jews. However, the accusation of antisemitism toward Israel's critics should be done with dispassionate examination of what the critics say. The Bible does not require us to bless Israel despite evil deeds. The example of the prophet Amos in particular shows that God did care about justice among them. Given the present crisis precipitated by October 7, 2023, just war theory rooted in natural law provides a framework in which the state of Israel can be scrutinized on an objective basis. International law, though ambiguous at times and not always binding, does present a framework to judge the legitimacy of the state of Israel through the modern agreements. In the end, it is dubious that Israel is guilty of the accusation's critics level at her. However, one can still before God scrutinize Israel. Until Messiah comes and the nation is purified, Israel remains in rebellion. The free world is right to be thankful for its presence in the Middle East, and their restoration to their own homeland was the right step following the Holocaust. The history of Israel should make any critic extremely cautious in entering such criticism. But Israel is not immune from making mistakes or facing the scrutiny that any other nation may face. May the truth win out in this world, but if it does not, we know God's prophetic salvation of "all Israel" is sure (Rom. 11:27). Fruchtenbaum's words are appropriate to conclude:

> Except for a select few, the vast majority of Dispensationalists have been supportive of the State of Israel. Some have gone overboard, virtually giving the State of Israel *carte blanche*, feeling they must support every decision the Israeli government makes. While this is certainly preferable to the view of those Covenant Theologians who wish that the State of Israel would cease to exist, it is nevertheless unwise. Like any other human nation, Israel will make political mistakes and be guilty of moral lapses. No Dispensationalist should support such things. The failure of Israel to give Jewish believers equal rights and immigration rights to Israel should also be condemned. However, no Dispensationalist can be silent on the issue of Israel's right to exist or right to

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the land. Basic support for the Jewish state arises from the very foundation of Dispensationalism.[104]

[104] *Israelology*, 720.

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