

The Stubborn Olive Tree: Why Scripture Demands We Speak the Ugly Truth About Israel—And Then Proclaim the Greater Glory of Grace

An Open Letter from a Pastor Who Refuses to Whitewash History or Diminish the Gospel

If you've grown weary of the endless cycle - The Stubborn Olive Tree: Why Scripture Demands We Speak the Ugly Truth About Israel—And Then Proclaim the Greater Glory of Grace headlines of Israeli settlements expanding into disputed territory, reports of civilian casualties in Gaza, whispers (and shouts) about disproportionate influence in global finance or media, or the raw biblical record of a people who killed their own prophets and handed their Messiah over to Roman executioners—then you are not alone. For centuries, voices from the margins have pointed at the Jewish people and said, "See? This is the root of the problem." And if we are honest with Scripture, there is fire in those accusations. The Bible itself supplies the kindling.

From the golden calf at Sinai to the golden calves of Jeroboam, from the stoning of Zechariah in the temple court to the crucifixion of Jesus outside Jerusalem's walls, the pattern is relentless. Isaiah 1 calls them "a sinful nation, laden with iniquity." Ezekiel 16 paints Jerusalem as a prostitute more depraved than her pagan neighbors. Jesus Himself wept over the city that "kills the prophets and stones those sent to her" (Matthew 23:37), then declared that the blood of righteous Abel to Zechariah would be required of "this generation" (Matthew 23:35). Stephen's final sermon in Acts 7 is a forensic indictment: "You stiff-necked people... you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?" Paul, once Saul the Pharisee, breathed murderous threats against the church before the risen Christ knocked him flat.

History does not soften the picture. Jewish leaders in the first century cooperated with Rome to silence the early church. In later centuries, some secularized Jews played outsized roles in revolutionary movements that brought rivers of blood—Bolshevism being the clearest and most tragic example. Today, the modern state of Israel, while surrounded by existential threats and exercising legitimate self-defense, is no sinless beacon. Settlement policies that many legal scholars deem violations of international law, military operations in Gaza that have tragically killed Palestinian Christians sheltering in churches (St. Porphyrius, Holy Family), and a secular government that often prioritizes power over prophetic justice—all of it is real. No nation escapes the curse of Adam. To pretend otherwise is to lie to the watching world.

So yes—the record is ugly. The Jewish people have, corporately and repeatedly, rejected the very God who chose them. And in an age of social media outrage, that admission feels almost rebellious. To utter it risks the scarlet letter "A" for antisemite. But silence in the name of

politeness is not love; it is complicity in delusion. The prophets never whitewashed Israel to win friends. Neither should we.

Yet here is where every hater, every frustrated observer, every weary Christian must stop and tremble.

Because the same Scriptures that expose the rebellion also declare something far more shocking: ****God has not cast them away. Not ever. Not finally.**

“Has God rejected his people?” Paul asks in Romans 11:1. “By no means!” He reminds us that even in the darkest hour—Elijah’s despair—God kept seven thousand who had not bowed to Baal. There has always been a remnant according to the election of grace. And the apostle’s anguished conclusion, written with tears, still stands: “As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (Romans 11:28-29).

This is the flip that changes everything.

The Jewish people were never chosen because they were better, holier, or less stubborn. Deuteronomy 9:4-6 is merciless: “Do not say in your heart... ‘It is because of my righteousness that the LORD has brought me in to possess this land’... for you are a stubborn people.” They were chosen precisely because they would become the greatest object lesson in human depravity and divine faithfulness the world has ever seen. A stiff-necked vine. A rebellious wife. An olive tree whose natural branches were broken off.

And the prophets promise the story is not over.

Zechariah 12–14 describes a day when the nations will surround Jerusalem once more, when two-thirds will be cut off in refining fire, and the surviving remnant will look upon the One they pierced and mourn as for an only son. Then “a fountain will be opened... to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.” Romans 11:25-26 seals it: “A partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved”.

This is not sentimentalism. This is sovereign grace on display. The same God who let them wander, who let them kill His Son, who let them scatter among the nations for two millennia, has never stopped loving them with an electing, covenant love. And that love will triumph. Not because they finally deserve it—none of us ever do—but because He is faithful when we are faithless.

So what does this mean for Christians today?

It means we must refuse both ditches.

We do not support every action of the Israeli government any more than we support every action of our own. All earthly powers—whether in Jerusalem, Washington, Tehran, or Moscow—are temporary and will one day bow or be broken before King Jesus (Revelation 19; Philippians 2:10-11). We are under no biblical mandate to baptize any nation-state as “God’s favorite.” The New Testament knows only one holy nation: the church of Jew and Gentile made one in Christ (1 Peter 2:9).

Neither do we join the chorus of Jew-hatred. That road leads to the gas chambers, the pogroms, and the eternal regret of those who persecuted the apple of God’s eye (Zechariah 2:8). Instead, we do what Paul did: preach the gospel “to the Jew first” (Romans 1:16). We pray for the peace of Jerusalem by praying for the Prince of Peace to rule in Jewish hearts. We expose sin where it exists—whether in Tel Aviv’s policies or in our own churches—without a trace of ethnic contempt. We refuse to slander an entire people while we ourselves were once “dead in trespasses and sins.”

The biblical way is conversion, not condemnation. The Great Commission still reads “make disciples of all nations,” and that includes the Jewish nation. Every Messianic Jew who has come to faith in Yeshua is living proof that the olive tree is being grafted back in even now. The future harvest will be glorious.

So let the haters rage. Let the world call us whatever it wishes. We will speak the whole truth: Israel’s failures are real, shocking, and repeatedly documented by God Himself. But God’s faithfulness is more shocking still. In the end, the stubborn olive tree will bloom. The remnant will see Him whom they pierced. And every knee—including every Jewish knee—will bow to the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

Until that day, our posture should be clear: truth without compromise, love without sentimentality, and urgent gospel proclamation to the people God still calls “beloved.”

Maranatha. Come, Lord Jesus. And hasten the day when “all Israel will be saved.”

For the glory of the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob—and every sinner He has ever redeemed.

Pastor Joseph Stansel