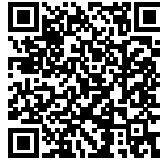


# ISRAEL, THE RED HEIFER, AND THE MESSIAH

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## Zionists and Zionism

One of the core projects of present-day Zionists is to build the Third Temple on the area that is also very sacred for Muslims, and where their third holiest mosque stands (Dome of the Rock).

But first, we must properly understand what we mean by "Zionism." As [Peter J. Miano](#) has rightly pointed out, the drive to return Jews to the Levant as their proper homeland is a very old Protestant project (going back to the 17th century), for Protestants largely believe that the Jews are the chosen people of God and must be treated with deference; and that as Christians are simply "add-ons" to this Godly race. This also means that God needs the Jews to do what He wants on earth; without them God is handicapped. Thus, it is the job of "Christians" to help Jews fulfill the will of God by assisting them in every way possible.

In other words, Zionism is not a Jewish "invention"—rather, it is a Protestant undertaking which the founders of Israel successfully harnessed to achieve their end of establishing a Jewish state. The vast majority of these Protestant Zionists live in the United States, and thus the power-base of Zionism is America—it is not Israel. Protestantism has always been about "Judaizing" Christianity; that is its logic. This is why Martin Luther, for instance, severely edited the Bible to make it more like the Torah, which he believed preceded the Christian Bible, so that the current Jews are therefore regarded as the very same ones as ones in the Old Testament. This notion of priority is what gives Protestant Zionism its justification: God made a promise with the Jews and God does not break His promise. This radically alters traditional Christianity (Catholic and Orthodox) and the New Testament in which Christians are now God's Chosen People.

Historically as well, modern-day Judaism is best understood as a hostile "younger sister" of Christianity, in that it was fashioned as a reaction and counter to Christian teaching. Just as there are all kinds of Jews today, so we really have no idea what the ancient Hebrew faith was all about. We only have a hint of the various sects that might have existed from Josephus, and even that is very unclear. But the common mistake in the popular Protestant mind is to imagine that Judaism is a unified and cohesive block, which is the "root" of Christianity. History does not allow such a conclusion. In fact, in antiquity, it is helpful to speak of Judaisms rather than Judaism.

Since Protestant Zionism imagines itself to be the helpmate of the Jews so they can accomplish God's

will in the here-and-now, the nation of Israel is thus a deeply Christian project, whereby geography has been given an eschatological destiny—the sole purpose of Israel existing is to bring the messiah so he can start his reign over all the earth. (He come for the Jews the first time, for these Protestants a second time). And it is the job of Zionism to clear the way for the messiah—and this is why God needs the Jews: He needs them to build the Third Temple, the precondition for the messiah. On a more mundane level, the two sides of the Zionist coin are using each other: the Zionists among Jews want a return to the “glory days” of a [Greater Israel](#) while the Zionists among Protestants are hoping that when the messiah returns, the Jews will convert and be saved. Within this sorry mix of ambitions are the Palestinians who are like grit in the eye of Zionism.

Before this Third Temple can be built, the area must first come under Jewish control, and the Dome of the Rock demolished. The familiar mosque with the golden dome is the third holiest place in Islam; destroying it will mean war with all of Islam. Can Israel handle such a war?

Next, the priests that will carry out the sacrifices and rituals will have to be made pure with “sin water”—which consists of the ashes of an immolated red heifer (a cow that has never calved), mixed with water. Without sin water no priest will be able to enter the temple. This ritual cleansing is taken from the book of Numbers:

And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: This is the observance of the victim, which the Lord hath ordained. Command the children of Israel, that they bring unto thee a red cow of full age, in which there is no blemish, and which hath not carried the yoke: And you shall deliver her to Eleazar the priest, who shall bring her forth without the camp, and shall immolate her in the sight of all: And dipping his finger in her blood, shall sprinkle it over against the door of the tabernacle seven times, And shall burn her in the sight of all, delivering up to the fire her skin, and her flesh, and her blood, and her dung. The priest shall also take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet twice dyed, and cast it into the flame, with which the cow is consumed. And then after washing his garments, and body, he shall enter into the camp, and shall be unclean until the evening. He also that hath burned her, shall wash his garments, and his body, and shall be unclean until the evening. And a man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the cow, and shall pour them forth without the camp in a most clean place, that they may be reserved for the multitude of the children of Israel, and for a water of aspersion: because the cow was burnt for sin. And when he that carried the ashes of the cow, hath washed his garments, he shall be unclean until the evening. The

children of Israel, and the strangers that dwell among them, shall observe this for a holy thing by a perpetual ordinance (Numbers 19: 1-10).

The move to build the Third Temple gathered steam, with the establishment of the Temple Institute in 1984, which is a vast umbrella organization that has schools, college prep courses, a publishing house, a museum and manufacturing facilities for the vessels needed in the Temple. Since the Institute's schools are recognized by the Israeli Department of Education, a large number of students come for further education, as well as thousands of soldiers in the IDF who come for seminars. The work of the Institute is supported by the Israeli Chief Rabbinate (the supreme spiritual leaders of the Jewish people in Israel). The Institute is also a regular haunt for American Protestant Zionists.

There are other affiliated groups working to build the Third Temple, namely, the [Temple Mount Administration](#), the [Temple Mount Faithful](#), the [Od Yosef Chai yeshiva](#), and the [Chai Vekayam](#) movement, led by [Yehuda Etzion](#) who has been deeply influenced by the teachings of Shabtai Ben-Dov, who advocated that the purpose of the Jewish state is to carry out conquest, no matter how merciless, of the Arabs, and that Israel can only be a theocracy rather than a democracy. Ben-Dov also advocated the building of the Third Temple, which would bring the messiah, and the entire world will then be ruled according to Jewish law and values, overseen by a Sanhedrin.

The commonly held belief is that the Third Temple is to be built exactly where the Second Temple once stood, which in turn was built where the First Temple was located. the [potential for great violence](#) is obvious.

But there are two preparatory steps that must be secured: the Jewish possession of the Al-Aqsa compound (the Temple Mount), and the breeding of the red heifer, without either the Third Temple cannot be built. And so it is on these two possibilities that most of the effort of the Institute is focused—and it is this agenda that archaeologists and historians also willingly promote when they declare once and for all that the Dome of the Rock is the location of the Second Temple.

To that end, the Chief Rabbinate now permits Jews to go and pray at the Temple Mount which has meant several violent incursions into Muslim holy ground by Third Temple [activists](#); the most recent by [Israeli police](#).

## The Red Heifer

The job of breeding the perfect red heifer has been the responsibility of Boneh Israel, run by both Jews and Protestants. Its mission, in its own words: "Boneh Israel (literally: 'Building Israel') is a nonprofit organization focused on building up and reviving important Biblical sites, bringing the Bible to life, educating the nations about the past, present and future of Israel, and actively bringing the redemption closer." In fact, [this effort](#) began [in the 1990s](#).

Archaeology has [long been used](#) in Israel to set up "markers" which say that "we Jews were always here," and which also has entirely [erased the Palestinians](#) from any such history, for it is ultimately a *Kulturkampf*.

The point of "actively bringing the redemption closer" is the key project, however, which has meant that Boneh Israel has been active in breeding the perfect, unblemished red heifer. And last year, they [delivered five such heifers](#) to Israel, which were bred in Texas by a rancher [named Byron Stinson](#) who is the founder of Boneh Israel: "The Bible says to bring a red cow to purify Israel, and I may not understand it, but I am just doing what the Bible said." If the heifers are thoroughly red and without blemish by the time they mature, then they will be burned to make sin water.

In the meantime, other things necessary for the Third Temple are underway: the [ritual vessels](#), the [musical instruments](#), the [cloths and vestments](#), and [the priests](#), five hundred of whom have been selected as being "direct descendants" of Levites from the time of the Second Temple.

The point of all this preparation is the strange belief that by doing everything right, the messiah will be forced to show up: it is the ancient notion of a god being contractually bound to do what you want him to do, because once humans do what they are supposed to do, then the god must also do what he is supposed to do. It is a type of deceit, trickery. We are very far from any notion of holiness and the dignity of sanctity. There is only a grim cosmic legalism.

## A Future?

Israel is caught in a curious dilemma. It justifies itself by promoting the narrative of rightful possession of land given to the Jews by God. But it also seeks to show itself as a democracy. The two cancel each

other out: if Israel truly believes that the Jews of today must pick up where the Jews two thousand years ago left off (when the Romans banished all Jews from the Holy Land and built a Roman city where Jerusalem of old once stood), then the likes of the Temple Institute alone can provide meaning for why Israel must exist, for then the nation must be a theocracy and fully participate in doing all that it can to bring the messiah so that he can reign over all the earth, with the Third Temple as the navel of such a world. Or, if Israel a democracy, then it cannot erase the Palestinians and continue treating them as unwanted menials, for democracy demands equality for all.

For example, [Old Jerusalem is being transformed](#) into a "historical park," where all sorts of reminders of a Jewish presence in the past are being created; and all these "reminders" point to the necessity of building the Third Temple.

Thus far, Israel has not been able to solve this dilemma—it does not still know what it really is—a process for the coming of the messiah, or simply a country, like all the rest in this world. But it will be hard for Israel to give up its special status the Land of God' Chosen, for this status has given it a lot of benefits from the USA. If it cannot resolve this dilemma, it will descend further into violence and disintegration—for it is a nation deeply divided by a messianic urge and the lure of democracy. Both cannot sustain each other.

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