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FOR the third time in the past three weeks, Benjamin Netanyahu — PM minister of a nuclear-armed nation supported and funded by all major Western capitals — has invoked the apocalypse and used religious justifications for waging a genocidal war on Palestinians.

While bombing hospitals, he spoke of the prophecy of Isaiah, which calls for the land to be cleansed of evil. While murdering children in their thousands he [referred](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMVs7akyMh0) to the Biblical call to destroy the people of Amalek down to infants and household pets. Now he has invoked the name of Joshua, who destroyed the people of Canaan in near-genocidal campaigns.

All this has been dutifully ignored by the Western media, and think thanks and rights organisations in the West who never fail to lecture the Muslim world on extremism every time a mullah gives a controversial sermon.

Does Netanyahu believe all this? Possibly. Is he using the language of religious extremism to appeal to an Israeli population that is now more radicalised than any nation-state in modern terms, barring possibly Nazi Germany?

Probably. Is he aiming this messaging at his strongest overseas constituency — evangelical Christians who believe that the founding of Israel was the first, but not the final step towards the end of times and the return of the messiah? Absolutely. But why would he want to appeal to those who, as per their own doctrines, don’t consider Jews worthy of salvation?

On Nov 7, 1917 a letter arrived at the home of British Zionist Lord Lionel Walter Rothschild. Written by British foreign secretary Arthur James Balfour the letter, later known as the ‘Balfour declaration’, stated that “His Majesty’s Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.” It is this missive that led to the creation of Israel and all the pain and horror that continues.

The evangelical Christians stand with Israel.

This was the culmination of efforts that began in 1896, when Theodor Herzl, a non-practising Jew who knew little about Jewish culture, wrote a pamphlet titled The Jewish State, which led to the creation of the Zionist congress, which lobbied for a Jewish homeland to be created in the model of the settler colonies that were springing up as European powers divided the world between them.

An antisemite, Balfour had recently blocked a bill allowing Jewish victims of East European pogroms from settling in the UK. So, it wasn’t love for the Jews that motivated him. Political Zionism was a fringe movement then and the greatest opposition to the declaration came from British Jews and the only Jewish member of the cabinet Edward Montague.

Geopolitics had a role but Balfour’s personal religious beliefs were also critical. A Christian Zionist, Balfour, like many in his time, believed that the Kingdom of God could not be established until the Jews had returned to their homeland.

Herzl himself recognised that antisemites in Europe were the natural allies of Zionism, an alliance that has prevailed to this day. So for Balfour, it was not just a question of creating an allied European colonial buttress in the Middle East, he also wanted to play a role in the fulfillment of prophecy.

That belief prevails today, and among the politically powerful, well-funded and religiously extremist evangelical Christians of America, it is what informs their absolute support for Israel; it’s not that they like Jews — quite the contrary.

It is that they need Israel to play its role so that the Rapture can take place, after which all who do not believe as they do —Jews included — will either be converted or killed.

These aren’t fringe movements, even though evangelicals are a minority (albeit a growing one) in the Chris­tian world. This is a group that counts leading political figures among its adherents, including political influential televangelists and pastors of mega churches who play a major role in determining who their flock votes for. All of them stand with Israel in order to, quite literally, bring about the end of the world.

Influential figures like preacher Jerry Falwell declared ‘To stand against Israel is to stand against God’, sentiments that were echoed when the newly elected US Speaker of the House stated that the Bible commands him to support Israel. But Israel’s creation was the first step, and the shifting of the US embassy to Jerusalem, acknowledging it as the ‘eternal capital’ of Israel was taken as another. Now what remains is the birth of the red heifer and the rebuilding of the Third Temple. And then, they believe, the apocalypse will follow.

So, in this worldview, the hundreds of thous­ands — Jews and Christians inclu­ded — calling for an end to these atrocities are ignored in order to fulfil the fantasies of fanatics wearing suits and ties and controlling the levers of the most powerful nation in the world.

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*Published in Dawn, November 6th, 2023*