The End of Defeatism

Netanyahu Sets out to Restore Israel’s Diplomatic ‘Red Lines’

By David Parsons

Even by Palestinian standards, the swift and complete rejection of an Israeli peace overture was baffling.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had just delivered his landmark policy speech on June 14 in which he had finally come to terms with the eventual creation of a Palestinian state. This should be cause for rejoicing on the Palestinian side. Granted, his acceptance was saddled with stiff preconditions – such a state must be demilitarized and the Palestinians must also recognize Israel as the Jewish homeland.

But these were quite reasonable opening demands by any objective measure. Even US President George W. Bush had set out stringent criteria for American recognition of a future Palestinian state. So why the sudden, hysterical invective from the Palestinian camp?

They mocked Netanyahu, insisting that in a thousand years he could not find a single Palestinian who would want to negotiate with him.

Even their friends in the leftist Israeli press were scratching their heads at the unusually “impulsive,” “frantic” and “petty” reactions of PA officials. After all, there was little new in Netanyahu’s stated positions. On Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, security concerns – he stuck to familiar red lines that surprised no one. So the guessing game began – was it a pre-planned ambush or a spontaneous vent.

Some surmised that the PA’s brusque response stemmed from their acute disappointment that the recent pressure applied on Netanyahu by US President Barack Obama had apparently not squeezed him hard enough.

“In one fell swoop, Netanyahu has deflected American pressure, and thrown the ball back into the Palestinians’ court.”

Within minutes of Netanyahu concluding his address at Bar-Ilan University, Saeb Erekat and the other professional complainers in the employ of the Palestinian Authority were lashing out at him in the media with personal insults and threats of a third intifada. Bibi was branded a “con-man and a liar” who had just buried the peace process alive.

>> CONTINUED ON PAGE 7
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Laying Claim to Jerusalem
The world wants a piece of the one place God has claimed for Himself

BY DARYL HEDDING

There’s something mysterious about Jerusalem. Despite the anticipation that grips even the seasoned traveller on the long climb through the Judean hills from Ben Gurion airport, the city on arrival is somehow anti-climatic. On paper, Jerusalem is really nothing that special. Sure, it has history, but there are far more beautiful cities in the world. There are certainly cleaner ones, with better planning and nicer drivers.

Yet everyone wants a piece of it. And everyone has a different opinion on who it belongs to and what should be done with it.

Even President Obama.

In his now-famous speech from Cairo, Obama opined for “all of the children of Abraham to mingle peacefully as in the story of Isra, when Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed (peace be upon them) joined in prayer.” This story is traditionally understood by Muslims to have occurred on the Temple Mount. Aside from the obvious problems presented by a professed Christian stating that God’s idea of peace is for the three major (and competing) religions to “mingle” in His holy city, there is a worrying assumption at work: That Christianity, Judaism and Islam all have an equal claim to Jerusalem.

The issue is one of sovereignty. Or, more specifically, denial of Jewish sovereignty over Jerusalem. This, despite the fact that since taking control over forty years ago, Israel has enabled all three faiths to worship there in unprecedented freedom.

What’s more, when Israel captured the Old City during the Six Day War of June 1967, Minister of Defence Moshe Dayan, made an immediate statement affirming Israel’s commitment to freedom of religion, and ceded administrative control of the Temple Mount to an Islamic Trust (Waqf). Why is it that the international community is so convinced that there is something broken here that urgently needs to be fixed?

You have to go back to the story of Isra. If Moses, Jesus and Mohammed all joined in prayer, to whom did they pray? Are we to believe that there are three routes to the same god or that the God of the Bible is so confused He cannot decide how to “reveal” Himself to different people? No, this debate is all about affirming the validity of the three religions, and their respective political claims to Jerusalem. If we are honest, it is not really about God at all.

And that’s the crucial point! It is God who has a claim to Jerusalem, not Judaism, or Christianity or Islam. And He’s decided to give it to Israel as an inheritance. They are His custodians whether the world likes it or not. What a cheek, to bring Him into the argument and then deny Him the right to His voice. The Bible tells us plainly that of all the real estate on earth, God chose a thin sliver of dust-filled land as His own, and picked a small group of people to live there and deliver His message of salvation to the world.

When you deny the Jewish people sovereignty over Jerusalem, it’s like telling God to get off His throne because you think you’ve figured out a better way to run the universe. The audacity.

So, what is it that makes this city so mysterious? Why is it so exciting and yet so frustrating? The Bible is clear that there is something eternal about Jerusalem. You can’t have heaven in your heart, and not be stirred by His Spirit when you enter the city that God says one day He will make new. On that day, He will rule and reign from Zion for eternity.

This year in Jerusalem!

Daryl Hedding serves as Controller for the ICEJ’s US Branch in Murfreesboro, TN
A Race Against Time

BY NATHALIE CHARRON

The generation of Holocaust Survivors is dying. But before they do, many are encountering the compelling depth of Christian love and care.

Willy is 84 years old, but he was as thrilled as a teenager when he recently received a motor scooter to move about town. As for his own childhood, it was anything but carefree.

Deported by the Nazis from Hungary to Auschwitz as a young boy, Willy was one of the scores of Jewish youngsters, mostly twins, who fell victim to the sadistic medical experiments conducted by Dr. Joseph Mengele. He underwent horrific research tests whose terrible effects are with him to this day. Willy can hardly sleep. He suffers from throat cancer and is unable to speak without a voice device. He has high blood pressure, his legs are giving way, and he has sharp pains in his back.

Two years ago, Willy also lost his beloved wife of 56 years to cancer. They both had survived the Auschwitz death camp and cherished their years together. But since her passing, his loneliness and lack of mobility were becoming too much to bear. Willy enjoys getting out to meet people, but he was stuck at home with anguished memories of lost family and his own cruel suffering.

But thanks to a special donation from ICEJ Finland, Willy now has an electric scooter and is able to venture out to run errands and enjoy the company of others.

Willy is one of the more than three dozen Holocaust survivors now living in northern Israel who have been “adopted” by Christians over recent years through the partnership of ICEJ AID - the Embassy’s social aid program - and a local charity named L’Chaim. Through this unique program, Christians have the opportunity to help destitute Holocaust survivors to live out their remaining years in dignity.

The ‘Adoption’ program provides food and financial assistance to Jewish survivors of the Shoah currently living in impoverished conditions in Israel. Just as important, it also sponsors regular in-home visits by student volunteers from a religious school who provide companionship for these elderly Israelis, while also giving the youngsters valuable, life-changing moments with those who experienced the harsh reality of the Nazi genocide.

An ICEJ AID team recently paid a visit to some of our adopted Holocaust survivors.

Upon meeting Esther, we could sense that behind her lovely, welcoming smile lay indescribable pain. As a child during World War II, she and her father hid out in cemeteries to survive, often literally burying themselves underground to escape danger.

“For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all.”
2 Corinthians 5:14
Hunger never left them. Esther eventually lost all her family during the war and immigrated alone to Israel in 1957.

Today, she is almost blind, and her years of malnutrition as a child have left her with a myriad of health problems. Thus she faces huge medical bills, but thanks to the adoption program she is able to cover them. The ICEJ also contributed towards a recently installed air conditioner that Esther was quick to show us. Having suffered two heart attacks, the long, hot summer now will be easier for her to take.

For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all...

2 Corinthians 5: 14

Our arrival at Esther’s home coincided with that of some energetic young men alighting from a mini-van. They had come from a religious high school to “put their Torah studies into practice,” as their rabbi explained. Twice a month, they pay in-home visits to Holocaust survivors. “They are like my sons,” said Esther, as she happily accepted bags of fresh fruit and vegetables from her two young “companions.”

Esther lost her husband almost 20 years ago, so she had been very lonely until these students started visiting. We left her enjoying the company of the boys.

We continued on to meet Ruth. She also was having an enjoyable visit with two boys from the same academy. She had neatly laid out tea, fruits and a delicious cake that she had baked especially for them. As the young men listened intently to her stories, we noted the warm friendship that had developed between them.

Ruth’s journey was different than Esther’s, but the wounds were just as deep. Born in Germany, she was separated as a child from her mother and sent with her older sister to England as part of the “Kindertransport” program that rescued some 10,000 Jewish youths from Nazi-occupied Europe on the eve of the war. In Britain they stayed in an orphanage where they suffered much abuse. Her mother and younger sister were later sent to the infamous Kovno Ghetto in Lithuania, where their lives ended in one of the many mass executions over open graves.

Ruth was eager to show us a photo album with pictures of her family. “This is my uncle, who was killed in the Holocaust... Here I am with my sister at the orphanage,” she reminisced.

Ruth, now 88, is living in the apartment left to her by her deceased second husband. She depends on a small government pension which is not adequate for her needs, and the compensation she was entitled to from the German government decades ago never made it to her. On top of this, her second husband’s children have tried to evict her from her home, only adding to her distress. No wonder she welcomes a listening ear.

We finish our day at the home of Adela where the students have been clearing her garden of briars and weeds. They look so happy after their day of hard work. The results will also certainly brighten Adela’s days. Seeing the boys “in action” brought to life the unique side of this project that teaches youth to reach out to these survivors and learn from them... and that brings joy and life to the survivors.

We invite you to join us in touching these precious lives in a profound way that brings Jews and Christians together.

But time is running out! Several of the survivors adopted over recent years have died already, but not before coming to know that Christians cared about them.

This program urgently needs your financial giving. For more information on how you can adopt one of the many Holocaust survivors on our waiting list, please contact us at icejaid@icej.org.

Nathalie Charron serves as an ICEJ AID project counsellor in Jerusalem
From Hong Kong to Le Chambon

ICEJ International Desk, Jerusalem

Standing Tall for Israel in Hong Kong

In May, ICEJ International Director Dr Jürgen Bühler travelled to Hong Kong for a series of meetings organized by our new branch in the bustling Chinese port. The gatherings were characterized by great enthusiasm for worship, prayer and to hear the word of God. Former ICEJ music director Chuck King was also invited to lead worship and had the Chinese believers dancing and singing with joy. Some of the churches were packed to capacity, and everywhere crowds came to hear about God’s purposes for Israel and enjoy Hebraic-style worship.

A meeting with the local Israeli Consul General confirmed that the area is indeed a strong potential partner for Israel and for the work of the Christian Embassy. “Unlike in other countries where I served, here in Hong Kong and China the Israeli-Palestinian conflict does not play as central a role in our conversations,” he stated. “When Chinese officials or media representatives come to my office, they want to speak about Israeli culture, innovations and high-tech – even Israeli food. It is a very positive and refreshing atmosphere for us.”

The ICEJ’s branch in Hong Kong was inaugurated just two years ago and has experienced a fruitful period of growth over that short time. Nancy and Colin Chow, our national directors for Hong Kong, are not only doing a wonderful job impacting the many churches in the thriving metropolis of eight million people, but they also are reaching out to the surrounding provinces in mainland China to hold regular speaking engagements on Israel in numerous church settings.

ICEJ-France Honors Legacy of Le Chambon

ICEJ France held its annual conference in early June in the historic town of Chambon sur Lignon, the only village in all of Europe where the entire community has been recognized by Israel’s Yad Vashem Remembrance Authority, as “Righteous among the Gentiles” for their efforts to rescue Jews during the Holocaust.
They were riding high following Obama’s own historic address to the Muslim world from Cairo just ten days earlier, in which he had identified so strongly with Palestinian “suffering,” while demanding that all Israeli settlement activity must stop. Calling his administration the “friendliest in decades” to the Palestinian cause, one PA official had confided, “We can be calm; it is the Israelis who should be worried.”

So when Netanyahu deftly managed to extricate himself from the ropes in a half-hour speech that was very “Zionist” at that, the Palestinians were livid.

But while most observers were busy analyzing Netanyahu’s sober address in comparison to Obama’s lofty oratory in Cairo, the real focus should have been on contrasting his text and tone with the policy statements of his predecessor-in-office, Ehud Olmert. For herein lies the real source of Palestinian consternation.

They had grown accustomed to an Israeli leader who maintained, “We are tired of fighting. We are tired of winning.” Last summer, Olmert insisted, “Israel’s problem is that it has no borders.” He told his cabinet, “The vision of a ‘Greater Israel’ is over.” In a farewell interview at Rosh Hashanna last fall, Olmert conceded, “we have no choice but to… withdraw” from the West Bank. And in one of his final official comments before stepping down, Olmert went further than any Israeli leader before him in expressing “sorrow” for the “suffering” and displacement of Palestinian refugees. His critics had summed up such public rhetoric as “defeatism.”

Meanwhile in private talks with PA chairman Mahmoud Abbas, Olmert had offered over 97% of the West Bank for a Palestinian state and reportedly opened the door to a ‘symbolic’ return of thousands of refugees. His proposals went well beyond the generous offer of Ehud Barak at the failed Camp David summit of July 2000. Once again, the Palestinians said “No!”

Yet now, in one fell swoop, Netanyahu had cleared the air of the defeatist approach, restored Israel’s red lines, deflected American pressure, and thrown the ball back into the Palestinians’ court. It swiftly sunk in that they were indeed facing a much tougher bargainer, and in a thousand years will never get a sweeter deal out of Netanyahu than they could have wrested from other recent prime ministers.

The onus is now on Abbas and his PA colleagues to not only answer why they are unwilling to sit down for talks with Netanyahu. They must also explain why they are always the ones saying “No!” to a Palestinian state whenever it is within reach.
For nearly 30 years the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem has been hosting a life-changing celebration of the biblical Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem - a world-class event which draws upwards of 7,000 Christians from almost 100 nations to worship God and stand with His people, Israel. This week-long event begins with a powerful night of worship in the Judean wilderness led by Paul Wilbur and culminates in Jerusalem with five days of teaching and worship featuring a host of speakers, musicians and dancers from Israel and across the world.

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