

## Paradox

### ***The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and Ministry in Israel and the Palestinian Territories Issue 40 July 2014***

*The newsletter, which seeks to take the needs, pain and fears of both sides seriously,  
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## Failure of the Peace Talks

We always knew that the Peace Talks were touch and go. On the Israeli side it increasingly appeared that the government were not really taking them seriously. There seemed to be a lack of commitment and a tendency to accept the status quo. It became more and more apparent that this would lead to trouble: probably another Intifada on the one hand and serious disapproval, not to say antagonism, by the world community towards Israel, on the other. However unbalanced some of this disapproval might be, it was obvious that Israel was playing a dangerous game. I say that out of deep concern, not negativism.

On the Palestinian side, frustration with the way the talks were going led Abbas to speak of quitting the talks and of seeking membership of various UN institutions. This, especially the latter, worried and infuriated the Israelis who then spoke of not, after all, releasing more Palestinian prisoners, as promised at the end of March. So the tit for tat began.

Israel said it didn't want the talks to fail but the Palestinians accused them of extending settlements, destroying Palestinian villages and neighbourhoods, killing Palestinians and planning separate access times to the Al-Aqsa Mosque for Muslims and Jews, so that Jews could pray in its grounds because it is the site of their temple – an extremely sensitive issue.

Israel wanted the Palestinians to stay in the talks and Prime Minister Netanyahu spoke of continuing with the prisoner release so long as the Palestinians decided against taking unilateral action against Israel in the UN. The Palestinians demanded Israel freeze settlements and allow them to construct important buildings in Area C of the West Bank which is under full Israeli control. But the Israel Lands Authority issued a tender for 708 residential units in Gilo, a disputed area of Jerusalem. This led the Palestinians to apply to join 15 United Nations treaties and conventions only hours before the Israelis met to decide to release more Palestinian prisoners. Netanyahu responded by freezing the transfer of tax money Israel collects for the Palestinian Authority. (It is worth mentioning in passing a piece of good news. On Israel's Holocaust Remembrance Day Palestinian President Abbas said publicly that the Holocaust was "the most heinous crime against humanity in modern history.")

Despite the extensive efforts of US Secretary of State, John Kerry, the talks descended towards failure. On one occasion Israel threatened unprecedented sanctions against the Palestinians because they had applied to the UN and because they were afraid that the Palestinians would prosecute Israel for war crimes at the world court.

Another sticking point was that Israel demanded the Palestinians recognise Israel as a Jewish state. For their part the Palestinians demanded that East Jerusalem become their capital.

Kerry blamed Israel for the failure of the talks because they did not release the prisoners and they approved the Gilo development although the causes seem more complex than that. Israel was “deeply disappointed” at his comments and blamed the Palestinians who wouldn’t even discuss Israel being a Jewish state.

One Israeli newspaper commented that Israelis would have “to choose which kind of state they want to live in and which vision of a state they want to vote for – that of a democratic state that respects the rule of law and human rights and sees international relations as a vital asset, or of a messianic, separatist state with features of an apartheid regime, in which a privileged Jewish population rules over millions of Palestinians.” Other Israelis said: “If Israel recognises an Arab Palestinian state, the Palestinians have to recognise a Jewish state.”

### *The Arab Peace Plan*

More recently, Prince Turki Al Faisal, Saudi Arabia’s ambassador to the U.K. and Ireland (2002 to 2005) and the U.S. (2005 to 2006) spoke of the Arab Peace Initiative (API) whereby all the Arab countries would establish normal relations with Israel once Israel withdraws from the territories occupied in the June 1967 war, and accepts an independent Palestinian state with its capital in East Jerusalem. (Exact borders and dealing with the problem of Palestinian refugees would be subject to negotiation). He commented: “Like others in the region, I remain saddened, too, as to why there has never been an Israeli government response to the API, despite the Arab world’s continuing to endorse it at every Arab League summit over the last 12 years, and at every summit organized by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and by the Gulf Cooperation Council.”

### *Israel as a Jewish state*

Prime Minister Netanyahu plans to enshrine in law that Israel is “the nation state of the Jewish people” whilst guaranteeing the personal and civil rights of all non-Jewish citizens. Justice Minister Tzipi Livni opposed this proposal because it was “subjugating Israel’s democratic values to its Jewish values.” Other Israelis feel the same way. Some Arab Israelis said such a law would

entrench discrimination against them in law and perpetuate their marginalisation. The Arab nations also said they would never recognise Israel as a Jewish state. The danger is that the new law would create first and second class citizens thus contradicting Israel's Declaration of Independence which states: "[Israel] will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture." It would also strengthen the influence of Jewish law over Israeli law which secular Israelis would reject. However a watered-down version of the bill, which did not subjugate democratic values to Jewish values, was discussed in June.

Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, an extreme right winger, has called for a transfer of Israeli Arab areas to any Palestinian state, which some Israelis call ethnic cleansing without violence. Some Israeli Arabs favour this proposal, though. Lieberman claimed no-one would be expelled or banished.

There is an on-going demographic threat to Israel in that most experts predict that the Arab population in Israel itself together with the Palestinian areas will soon exceed the Jewish population. Unless there is a two-state solution this would undermine Israel's position as a democracy with a Jewish majority.

### *Settlements*

During the negotiations Israel promoted the construction of 13,850 homes in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. In April Israel appropriated the largest area of land in many years at Gush Etzion which some Israelis said was illegal. Netanyahu said that Jerusalem will never again be divided and at the end of June the cabinet approved a plan to strengthen Israeli control over East Jerusalem. There does seem to be significant support amongst the Palestinian population of East Jerusalem to integrate into Israel.

### *"An apartheid state"?*

John Kerry caused a furore by warning that if there was no agreement on a two-state solution Israel risked becoming an apartheid state. His actual words were: "a unitary state winds up either being an apartheid state with second class citizens—or it ends up being a state that destroys the capacity of Israel to be a Jewish state." He later apologised. There is, of course, no way that Israeli Arabs are treated like black people were in apartheid South Africa but, as we have noted, there is a danger of Palestinians becoming second-class citizens. F W De Klerk, the last white South African president, said it was unfair to call Israel an apartheid state but added that the test would be that in a unitary state everyone must enjoy full human rights.

In passing, it is worth recording that some right-wing, ultra-Orthodox Jews are protesting about there being a Christian presence on Mt Zion in Jerusalem. Christian sites have suffered slashed car tyres, spray-painted slogans and spitting attacks.

### **The rights and wrongs of the Israel-Gaza conflict**

Despite the tendency of some commentators and especially demonstrators to claim the situation is simple – either all Israel’s fault or all Hamas’ fault – it is actually not straightforward. There are various factors.

#### *a) Israel’s treatment of Gaza before the conflict*

In April 2014 the new Commissioner General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) said the blockade of Gaza by Israel is the “longest in history.” He described it as an “illegal collective punishment” of the Palestinian people. UNRWA states that major problems facing the people of Gaza include electricity cuts, high unemployment, a three-mile fishing limit, contaminated water supply and lack of availability of construction materials. They add that there is “extremely high unemployment [40%]. Far fewer families can provide for themselves and a staggering proportion of the population is dependent on UNRWA’s food and cash assistance. Ninety per cent of the water is unfit for human consumption, so basic hygiene is another great concern.” They continue: “The ban on entry of cement and gravel has made it impossible for refugees to build or repair shelters ... The Israel Defense Forces’ imposition of a three-mile fishing limit has [led to] diminished fishing catch ... and increased poverty.” The infamous Gaza tunnels are used to transfer goods as well as for smuggling weapons and infiltrating Israel.

However, it also has to be said that instead of building the economy Hamas has spent tens of millions of dollars creating a militarized state with subterranean stockpiles of weapons.

Shawan Jabarin, General Director of Al-Haq, a Palestinian human rights organization accuses Israel of exploiting Palestinian natural resources. He said a recent World Bank report noted that the Palestinians could derive over \$3bn annually from the resources in Area C of the West Bank (which is under complete Israeli control). He added that the Israeli West Bank settlements are strategically located in order to control water, land and mineral resources and that the Israeli naval blockade prevents the Palestinians from exploiting the gas reserves off the coast of Gaza.

#### *b) Hamas’ attitude towards Israel*

Hamas is an Islamic Resistance Movement which developed from the Muslim Brotherhood and is supported by Iran. It aims to establish an Islamic state in the West Bank and the Gaza strip (in 2006 it won 74 of 132 seats in the Palestinian Legislative Council and was put in charge of Gaza). Its charter states: “Nothing is loftier or deeper in Nationalism than waging Jihad against the enemy and confronting him when he sets foot on the land of the Muslims.” It has called for the destruction of the state of Israel, and refused to recognize it. Hamas has a military wing which is responsible for most of the violence. It has carried out hundreds of attacks against military and civilian Israeli targets – rocket attacks, suicide bombers, shootings and knifings. Western governments therefore regard it as a terrorist organisation and, naturally, Israel is antagonistic towards it.

However there does seem to be a more moderate private aspect of Hamas which is willing to talk of a truce if Israel allows a Palestinian State in the West Bank and Gaza. The Fatah-Hamas reconciliation agreement in April 2014 was said to be based on a two-state solution and recognized the State of Israel. There have been contradictory comments from Hamas about this though.

Nevertheless the violence continued, especially by way of rocket attacks on Israel. The reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas took place at the time of the breakdown of the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks and it produced a very negative reaction in Israel. They saw it as Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas linking up with a terrorist group on the border of Israel which threatens Israeli security. The US said the timing of the reconciliation was unhelpful but John Kerry said they would work with the new Palestinian government as did the EU and other world powers.

*c) The murder of the teenagers*

Then in June 2014 three Israeli teenagers were kidnapped in the West Bank and killed. Israel accused Hamas of being responsible and claimed that a number of previous attempts at kidnapping had occurred. Also Hamas leader Khaled Meshal hinted that Hamas would seek to kidnap Israelis some weeks earlier. Abbas condemned the kidnappings and accused the kidnappers of “seeking the destruction of the [Palestinian] Authority.” Israel began to make aggressive raids and many arrests in the West Bank and Hamas warned that this could lead to a third Intifada (and a subsequent demonstration on the West Bank where five Palestinians were killed seems to confirm this). Sadly, Israel reverted to its practice of destroying the homes of alleged kidnappers, despite the fact that someone is innocent until proved guilty and other innocent Palestinians suffered as a result of the demolition. Human Rights Watch described this as illegal collective punishment. Then, tragically, a Palestinian teenager was burnt alive by Israeli extremists.

*d) Hamas rocket attacks on Israel*

In the first six months of this year, before the Israeli military response, some 170 rocket attacks were launched against Israel from Gaza. Rocket attacks from Gaza increased in July. Possible motives include punishing Israel for its widespread arrests in the West Bank, showing Hamas was still in charge in Gaza and (if rogue groups were involved) maybe seeking to undermine the reconciliation between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority. Israel responded with air attacks on Gaza but said it wasn't seeking escalation. Some days later Israel said it would not launch a larger offensive if Hamas ceased the rocket fire. However the escalation continued and included the ground attack by the Israelis. Israel was aware that Hamas had some 10,000 rockets, including longer-range rockets that could reach Tel Aviv and beyond – a new and very dangerous factor. From July 1st-27th almost 2000 rockets were fired from Gaza into Israel. Because they are inaccurate they are effectively fired indiscriminately against the Israeli population.

Tragically, Israeli air attacks hit an increasing number of civilians, well over a thousand at the time of writing, including babies, children, disabled people and elderly people. There was growing criticism of the number of civilian casualties caused by Israeli military action, but the Israeli response is that Hamas uses civilians as human shields.

*Which side is mainly to blame?*

There is a lot of uninformed, prejudiced comment on this question. Again, the situation is complicated. Here are some considerations:

1. Hamas is regarded as a terrorist organisation. However “one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter.” We did not regard, for example, the French underground in the second world war as terrorists. We have described above the serious problems caused by the ongoing Israeli blockade of Gaza. But Hamas is attacking civilians indiscriminately with its rockets. We should remember, however, that civilians were targeted by the West in the second world war, e.g. in the firebombing of Dresden and the use of the atom bombs. That does not, of course justify the practice.
2. Hamas uses mosques, hospitals and schools to conceal rockets and other weapons, as well as underground tunnels. It is using civilians as human shields. However this has been disputed as an Israeli myth by some Western commentators. It is significant therefore that the UN secretary-general said a few days ago that rockets were discovered in a UN-run

school in Gaza and now have gone missing, and he demanded a full review of such incidents.

3. In targeting Ben Gurion airport, Hamas is effectively firing at civilian aircraft – shades of the Ukraine. On the other hand the rockets are not guided missiles such as the Ukrainians used.
4. The Israelis ask what other countries would do if 80% of their population were under constant threat of rocket attacks. We have noted that Hamas fired some 170 in the months before the Israeli action as well as some 2000 in July. No country would accept that without a strong response. Some say there isn't much real danger to Israelis because of their Iron Dome protection but, despite appearances, recent reports say the Dome is only about 5% effective and that civilians are protected by civil defence actions.
5. Israel warns civilians of an impending attack using leaflets, text messages, and prior “knock on roof” projectiles. However although Israel said the UN had been warned about the attack on the school in Beit Hanoun, the UN said they hadn't received this warning. Was this simply a mistake?
6. Hamas rejected ceasefires at times, when Israel has accepted them. Could this be because Hamas knows Palestinian civilian casualties are a PR disaster for Israel?
7. Over 1000 civilians – many of them innocent - have been killed at the time of writing by Israeli attacks on Gaza and the UN Human Rights Council decided to form an international commission concerning alleged Israeli war crimes in Gaza.
8. Sadly, alongside reasonable criticism of Israel, anti-Semitism is growing in many countries and clouding the issues.

However, the Council of the European Union has just published a report calling for an immediate ceasefire and strongly condemning “the indiscriminate firing of rockets into Israel by Hamas and militant groups in the Gaza Strip, directly harming civilians” as “criminal and unjustifiable acts.” It “strongly condemns calls on the civilian population of Gaza to provide themselves as human shields.” It also condemns “the loss of

hundreds of civilian lives, among them many women and children. While recognizing Israel's legitimate right to defend itself against any attacks, the EU underlines that the Israeli military operation must be proportionate and in line with international humanitarian law. The EU stresses the need for protection of civilians at all times.”

**NB This letter was published before the terrible tragedy in the UN school which should have been avoided at all costs**

## **PRAY**

- i. For a lasting ceasefire
- ii. For the protection of all innocent civilians
- iii. For successful negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians to remove the blockade on Gaza whilst protecting Israel's security.
- iv. For the recent traumas to prompt a resumption of peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians leading to peace with justice for both people groups.

**AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT: you may like to read below the very encouraging recent letter from Rachel Netanel, the Israeli evangelist living on the outskirts of Jerusalem, who is supported by Paradox. She mentions the troubles but also shares some amazing answers to prayer. She is winning both Jews and Arabs to faith in Christ.**



## Beit Netanel News

July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2014

Dearest beloved friends,

*“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: ‘May they prosper who love you.’”* Psalm 122:6

All of Israel is under tremendous pressure as rockets have reached 90% of the country’s population. But praise God for His mercy, as we have the ‘iron dome’, which the Israelis have developed. (My son was on the team of Israeli army system developers who invented this protection for Israeli citizens.) Because of the iron dome and the fact that almost all homes have bomb shelters, the casualties in Israel have not been large. However, we are always saddened to hear of the loss of civilians in Gaza who are used as human shields by Hamas. This is the difference. In Israel our soldiers are on the front lines and the civilians hide in bunkers. In Gaza, shelters are used for Hamas and their rockets, and civilians are used to shield them. Oh Lord, may we see Your righteousness and Your salvation for both Jew and Arab.

However, many Israelis are afraid and because they do not know the Lord, these are the best days to preach the Gospel. I have taught many people about the prophecies of the Bible and that we need to pay attention to what is happening around us... in Syria, Iraq, Iran... God is changing boundaries. He is sending us warnings. These events are meant to wake us up and repent so that the same things will not happen to us. God is shaking us up and even now He is showing us His hand of protection. Now in these days, we need to pay attention to what is written in the Tenach [Bible] and what is really written about our Messiah.

There are many people who want to hear the encouraging words that God has given me for them. My sister-in-law is one of them. She is the widow of my brother who died in another one of our wars. Because she is poor and alone, she wants to come and be with us and to learn more about Yeshua [Jesus]. I am praying with her often.

A couple of weeks ago we decided at the congregation to begin a new program of evangelism. Then the war broke out and we proceeded to start with an open invitation for people to come and have a Kabbalat Shabbat [Sabbath evening] meal in my home (which is a large cave so it is also a shelter.) We purchased a lot of food and calculated that perhaps 40 people would come. We called people on the phone and even put a sign up on the street outside my home. Almost 70 people showed up. Eighty percent of them were non-believers and almost all of the believers were Hebrew speakers. It was an awesome evening. People came from Jerusalem, Ness Ziyona, Rishon, Tel Aviv and even as far as Haifa. The parents of my friends from Ness Ziyona (whom I have mentioned in the past) came and brought some musicians with them. So we had beautiful music all evening and the

atmosphere was festive and very enjoyable. We had so many opportunities to talk with people and share our faith. One of them was a woman by the name of D. She accepted the Lord as her saviour and cried so much. She did not want to leave, so she and a number of others spent the night at our house. In the morning, we taught more from the Bible and I shared my testimony and about the signs and wonders that the Lord has done in my life. D. told me that she has never felt this way before and was so pleased that I gave her a Bible with a personal blessing written in it. They already have been asking when we will have the next Kabbalat Shabbat meal and they have also invited us to visit them.

Some of my friends from the congregation were there and when they saw how this lady was led do the Lord they felt inspired to evangelize more. Our pastor and his wife (Eddie and Jackie) also commented that this is the way to evangelize, through Israeli hospitality and the warm atmosphere which makes people want to come and hear more. We have decided that we should do this once every two months as a congregational outreach.

My joy is to show people that evangelism is not just to give out a tract or to read from the Bible. I show them how to prepare a warm and loving atmosphere and to find a common ground with the people so that they will want to hear what we have to share. There is much preparation that goes into events like this. It starts on Sunday when we begin to call people that we have met in our daily walk. We don't just talk about the Bible but about what is happening in their day-to-day lives. I usually spend at least 20 hours on the phone over the week. On Monday we begin to buy some food and by Wednesday we begin the preparations in the garden and the house by cleaning and setting up tables, etc. We continue to call people and to encourage them to come. On Thursday, we begin food preparations and on Friday we cook and pray.

Our vision is growing and we are seeing so many people coming as we try to do things to reach people by being sensitive to them and by constantly re-enforcing our care for them by calling them and keeping in touch. [My husband] Gilad is such a wonderful godly example to many. He demonstrates true humility and servant-hood. They all love him so much as he is always serving them by caring for their needs and giving them something to drink or eat. His love for them and the Lord shines through even without a common language.

Let me fill you in on the saga with the people from the synagogue who at one time threw Gilad and I from there on Yom Kippur a few months ago. Since then some of them have come to celebrate feasts in my home and one of them is an officer of the army who is the leader of young people being inducted into the army. They asked if they could bring about 40 of these young people to my home to have a day of fun and also to hear my testimony. I shouted to God for this great gift and wonderful opportunity that He has given me. One Sunday they came and stayed from 8 in the morning until about 8 in the evening. They had so much joy just having fellowship with food and fun

mostly in my beautiful garden. I gave them food, cake and lots of love. About 10 of them gave me their phone numbers, as they really want to come again and learn more. The officer said that many commented that they hope they could grow to be like me... Lord, may they give their hearts to you and become just like you!

Beloved, please continue to pray for Israel – for her protection and especially for her salvation. Please pray for all of our dear messianic soldiers who even as I write are entering on foot into Gaza. It is so heart breaking to hear of these young men kissing their families goodbye and going to the front lines. May they return in peace. Please pray that the innocent people of Gaza will find peace both physically and spiritually.

In the undying love of our Messiah, Yeshua,

Rachel (Netanel)

*If you would like to support Rachel financially (support she really needs) please send a cheque to:*

*Paradox Ministries. Post to The Rev. T. Higton, 17 Church View, Marham, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE33 9HW, stating whether you are a tax payer and wish to Gift Aid your donation and supplying name, address, phone and email.*

Also, contact Tony if you would like to receive Rachel's monthly email newsletter.