

## What is the purpose of Paradox?

The purpose of Paradox is to encourage informed prayer for Israel and the Palestinians in the light of God's purposes as revealed in Scripture.

I feel passionately about justice for the Palestinians as well as for the Israelis because God is a God of justice who requires his people to act justly.<sup>1</sup> But there is much more to the situation than that.

## The biblical context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

We need to take seriously the purposes of God for Israel in the End Times. The following points are vitally important.

Scripture foretells that:

- The Jewish people would regain control of Jerusalem, i.e. they would return to the land (Luke 21:24) – this has happened but they have returned in unbelief. (See footnote for further comment.<sup>2</sup>)
- God has not given up on the Jewish people and they will eventually turn to Christ in massive numbers (Rom 11) – more and more Jewish people are doing so. (See footnote for further comment.<sup>3</sup>)
- Jewish people would rebuild the Temple - there is a strong movement towards this, based on Ezekiel 40-46, which is linked to the growing trouble on Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The rebuilding of the Temple is not God's will because it is contradictory to the Gospel but that doesn't mean it won't happen. (See the footnote for further comment.<sup>4</sup>) God can use events which are not according to Gospel principles as a factor in his purposes for the world.
- The world would turn against the Jewish people (Zech 12-4; Rev 16:12-16) – this is happening partly because of anti-Semitism and anti-Israel attitudes but also because of Israel's intransigence over a just settlement for the Palestinians, unjust treatment of Palestinians in the West Bank and rejecting of world opinion in these and other matters. On another level, growing Islamic extremism is bent on the destruction of Israel (Hamas, Iran, ISIS and Hezbollah, in particular). (It is worth saying that Jewish people have sometimes gained the impression that Christians are rather looking forward to the attacks on Israel because it is an indication of the approach of the Return of Christ. Such an attitude would, of course, be quite wrong. We should lament such attacks). (See the footnote for further comment.<sup>5</sup>)

Current events give a clear indication that we are living in the End Times and witnessing the fulfilment of prophecy. We do not, of course, know the timescale, but what is happening in the world today underlines the credibility of the biblical prophecies.

We Christians should be praying:

- For Jewish people to turn to Christ
- For Israel to obey Scripture and so to treat the Palestinians justly, seeking peace.
- For the protection of the Jewish people and Israel from anti-Semitic attitudes and actions, including Islamic extremism.
- For the fulfilment of God's End Time purposes, which includes a major impact on the world for the cause of the Gospel caused by Israel coming to recognise Jesus as their Messiah.

Christians who, like me, believe God has brought the Jewish people back to Israel, differ over the issue of a just solution for the Palestinians. Some believe that the West Bank (with some territorial adjustments) and Gaza should become the State of Palestine – the two state solution (See my article "Is it right to divide the Promised Land?"<sup>6</sup>) Others believe that the Palestinians should be incorporated into the nation of Israel – the single state solution. The two state solution involves dangers. A Palestinian state on Israel's borders could become a real threat to Israel's security. The single state solution also has serious difficulties. It would be unjust for the Palestinians to become second-class

citizens of Israel but the Arab birth rate is such that over a period of years there would be a majority of Arab citizens in the democracy of Israel and the Jewish citizens would become a minority.

All of this should be a strong motive for praying earnestly for Israel and the Palestinians.

## **News Update**

### **The moribund Peace Process**

The Israeli-Palestinian peace process seems dead, although there have been some attempts to restart it. In July there was a secret meeting in Amman between the Israeli Interior Minister and the chief Palestinian negotiator but it was reported that nothing new came out of it. Prime Minister Netanyahu said in September that he supports a two-state solution and was ready to meet Palestinian President Abbas if the latter was willing to meet. In October Netanyahu said: "I have called on Abbas time and time again to renew peace talks without preconditions. I am willing to meet him, he is not willing to meet me." Later in October the French Foreign Minister tried to arrange a summit between Netanyahu and Abbas. Netanyahu said he was willing but Abbas has not responded. This, of course, gives the impression that Netanyahu is the good guy and Abbas the bad guy. But many people find it difficult to trust Netanyahu because of his inconsistencies and politicking.

Having said that, many Palestinians don't trust Abbas. A recent poll found that only 16% of Palestinians trusted him. 65% of them want Abbas to resign and satisfaction with his performance fell from 44% in June to 38% in September. 35% said they would vote for Hamas, the ruling party in Gaza and 35% said they would vote for Fatah (Abbas's party). The poll also found that 51% of Palestinians oppose a two-state solution and 48% support it. 42% of Palestinians think a Palestinian state will only be achieved through violence and only 29% by negotiation.<sup>7</sup>

### **The growth of Jewish extremism**

Israeli commentators report that there is a growing number of Jewish extremists who are not simply wanting to attack Palestinians but to destabilise what they regard as an ungodly Israeli secular democracy and to replace it with a "Judean State." They see Netanyahu as an apostate traitor. Such extremists were blamed for the horrific arson attack on a Palestinian home in July in which a baby was killed and other family members later died. The Israeli army called it "Jewish terror." The words "Revenge" and "Long live the Messiah" were sprayed on the burnt buildings. This is reminiscent of a book published in 2009 by Rabbis Yitzhak Shapira and Yosef Elitzur which justified the killing of non-Jews and even non-Jewish children because they might pose a future threat to the Jewish population. The authors were arrested but released without charge. Similarly, Rabbi Yitzhak Ginsburgh praised Baruch Goldstein who massacred 29 Palestinians worshipping in a Hebron mosque because he acted on the Jewish legal principle of revenge.

There have been seven previous arson attacks by Jewish extremists on inhabited buildings since 2012. There have also been dozens of attacks on Palestinian mosques, businesses and farms. In most cases the perpetrators were not found. 17 churches and mosques have been set ablaze by Jewish extremists in the past four years, yet not a single person has been arrested. Following the July attack thousands of Israelis demonstrated against the Jewish extremists. It is interesting that Nehemia Shtrasler, a senior Israeli business journalist, wrote an article entitled "A modern cult of Jewish zealots is leading Israel toward a war of Gog and Magog."<sup>8</sup> Israeli politicians called for such extremists to face the death penalty. Uri Avner was a member of Irgun, a Jewish Zionist paramilitary group, but left it, saying "I didn't like the methods of terror applied by the Irgun at the time." He did not favour retaliating to Arab attacks by killing Arabs. In August this year he wrote a disturbing article about "Jewish Terrorists" in which he said: "I believe [these] groups in today's Israel are far more dangerous than most people believe. This is not a handful of wild weeds as we are led to believe. This is a national cancer that can spread quickly in our national body. I have seen it before."<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile Bentzi Gopstein, leader of the Lehava anti-Gentile organisation said following the arson on the Church of Lovaes and Fishes in Galilee that people should "go out and burn churches."

### **Trouble in the West Bank**

However, it is not just Jewish extremists causing trouble. In the first eight months of 2015 the Israeli government ordered the demolition of 331 Palestinian buildings in the West Bank resulting in 457 people, including 263 children, losing their homes. They were built without permits because Israel refuses to grant permits. The UN found that only 33 of 2,020 Palestinian planning applications were approved.

At the same time, West Bank Jewish settlements are being expanded despite the international community regarding them as illegal. In 2006 it was discovered that back in 1968 Theodor Meron, Israeli foreign ministry's legal adviser, stated that "Civilian settlement in the administered territories contravenes explicit provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention."<sup>10</sup> But the Israeli government has persisted in ignoring this ruling. Tzipi Hotovely, Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister said in September that the West Bank was not "even on the list of options we're offering the Palestinians" and will remain under Israeli "de facto sovereignty."<sup>11</sup>

Mahmoud Abbas, Palestinian President is 80 and cutting back on his workload. People have said he is exhausted and has lost faith in the two state solution to the conflict. He has said recently that, in view of the failure of the peace talks, the Palestinian Authority can't continue to be bound by agreement with Israel. He accused Israel of not keeping to agreements and of seeking to stop any progress towards a two state solution. More serious a recent poll found that 57% of Palestinians support the resumption of an intifada (armed uprising). One Israeli newspaper said: "There is no more doubt regarding the ambition driving this government: to completely thwart a two-state solution, to further entrench the occupation until it becomes irreversible — assuming that's not already the case — and to prevent any possibility of a deal with the Palestinians based on a partition of the land."<sup>12</sup>

Sadly violence has increased with killings on both sides.

## **Conflict on Temple Mount**

Temple Mount is sacred to both Judaism and Islam but Jews are not allowed to pray there. It is the site of the Jewish Temple and there is a growing movement to work towards the rebuilding of the Temple. Jewish religious schools are teaching children to "Long for the third Temple" and this could lead them to be involved in violent action. There are fears that fundamentalist Jewish Israelis are seeking to change the oversight of Temple Mount which has been governed by the Jordanians since 1967. On the other hand, Sheik Muhammad Ahmad Hussein, the grand mufti of Jerusalem, said recently on Israeli television that there has never been a Jewish temple on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem because there has been a mosque on the site "since the creation of the world." This piece of ridiculous propaganda could fan the flames of conflict. Hussein has previously called for suicide bombings against Israelis. The tension has risen on Temple Mount and the Palestinians have just rejected an Israeli plan, developed in co-operation with Jordan, to erect surveillance cameras to try and counteract any provocative behaviour.

## **Gaza**

In July this year senior Israeli army officers recommended an almost complete lifting of the blockade against Gaza: opening the border, allowing Palestinians to work in Israel and to travel to Jordan, allowing more imports and exports into the Strip. An adviser to the Turkish Prime Minister said there would be a comprehensive agreement between Israel and Hamas. Tony Blair was acting as mediator but Hanan Ashrawi, the Palestinian spokesperson accused him of trying to increase the division between Gaza and the West Bank which could hinder the development of a Palestinian state. Hassan Yousef, a Palestinian MP, listed the conditions for a truce between Hamas and Israel as also including a great improvement in Gazan living conditions, reconstruction of Gaza after the devastation of the recent war and freedom for people and goods to travel in and out of Gaza by sea.

Israel denied the negotiations but there seems to be evidence they actually took place. Then in late August four children were killed by an Israeli attack on a Gaza beach. There have since been rocket attacks on Israel and retaliatory strikes.

## **International reaction**

Israel is facing an increasingly negative international reaction to the stalling of the peace talks and the regular expansion of the West Bank settlements. The Boycott, Divest and Sanctions campaign is growing in Europe. A European Union boycott would cost some \$23.3 billion of exports and cost some 36,500 jobs. On November 11<sup>th</sup> 2015 the EU agreed to label goods which are from the West Bank which will facilitate a boycott.

136 of the 193 countries in the UN have recognised Palestine. This represents over 82% of the world population. In October 343 British academics published a full page advert in The Guardian which stated: "As scholars associated with British universities, we are deeply disturbed by Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian land, the intolerable human rights violations that it inflicts on all sections of the Palestinian people and its apparent determination to resist any feasible settlement."

Dr Alon Liel is the former director general of the Foreign Ministry of Israel and was also Israel's ambassador to South Africa. Ilan Baruch is a former Israeli ambassador to South Africa. They wrote in The Guardian in September 2015 about the statement of Tzipi Hotovely, Deputy Foreign Minister of Israel, that Judea and Samaria were given to Israel by God and she believed that when the public understands that the world will stop condemning Israel for the occupation and settlements. Liel and Baruch commented: "Europe must understand the direction in which we are heading. We are racing towards a single Israeli-Palestinian state that will end up as the apartheid state of Israel. Such a joint state will not allow the Palestinians to exercise their full civil rights. Europe and the UK must speak up in order to save the two-state idea. Their leaders need to say to Israel: "This land is not exclusively yours. It also belongs to another indigenous people that have been living there for centuries: the Palestinians. We recognise this people's right to share this land and its right to an independent state."<sup>13</sup> This article graphically portrays the polarisation of Israeli opinion.

## The rise of Islamic extremism

A recent report states that Christianity "could disappear completely" within 10 years in parts of the Middle East, as Isis and other groups continue their violent persecution of the faith. This also inevitably threatens the security of Israel.<sup>14</sup>

## Pray

1. For Jews and Arabs to come to faith in Christ.
2. For Christians to understand God's purposes for Israel.
3. For Israel to recognise its divine call to act justly towards the Palestinians.
4. For the Palestinians to resist moving towards a third intifada.
5. For the protection of the Jewish people and Israel from anti-Semitic attitudes and actions, including Islamic extremism.
6. For the renewal of an effective peace process.
7. For the curbing of both Jewish and Palestinian extremism.
8. For the international community to act constructively to facilitate peace with justice for both sides.

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.prayerforpeace.org.uk/calltojustice.html>

<sup>2</sup> (See my detailed comments at <http://www.christianteaching.org.uk/furtherstsignsoftheend2.html>. Summary at [http://www.christianteaching.org.uk/furtherstsignsoftheend2summary.html#\\_The\\_return\\_of](http://www.christianteaching.org.uk/furtherstsignsoftheend2summary.html#_The_return_of)).

<sup>3</sup> (See my detailed comments at [http://www.christianteaching.org.uk/oldtestamenteschatology.html#\\_Israel\\_will\\_turn](http://www.christianteaching.org.uk/oldtestamenteschatology.html#_Israel_will_turn). Summary at [http://www.christianteaching.org.uk/oldtestamenteschatalogysummary.html#\\_What\\_is\\_the](http://www.christianteaching.org.uk/oldtestamenteschatalogysummary.html#_What_is_the)).

<sup>4</sup> See my detailed comments at [http://www.christianteaching.org.uk/thegreattribulationandtheantichrist1.html#\\_Are\\_the\\_references](http://www.christianteaching.org.uk/thegreattribulationandtheantichrist1.html#_Are_the_references). Summary at [http://www.christianteaching.org.uk/thegreattribulationandtheantichrist1summary.html#\\_Are\\_the\\_references](http://www.christianteaching.org.uk/thegreattribulationandtheantichrist1summary.html#_Are_the_references).

<sup>5</sup> See my detailed comments at <http://www.christianteaching.org.uk/thebattleofarmageddonandcosmicsigns.html>. Summary at <http://www.christianteaching.org.uk/thebattleofarmageddonandcosmicsignssummary.html>.

<sup>6</sup> <http://christianteaching.org.uk/blog/eschatology/is-it-right-to-divide-the-promised-land/>

<sup>7</sup> Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research poll 21<sup>st</sup> September 2015. See <http://www.pcpsr.org/en/node/619>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-1.669377>

<sup>9</sup> <http://zope.gush-shalom.org/home/en/channels/avner/1439568935>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/news/middle-east/18777-israeli-government-legal-adviser-warned-of-illegality-of-demolitions-and-deportations>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.timesofisrael.com/eu-labeling-of-west-bank-goods-is-a-red-line-israels-top-diplomat-warns/>

<sup>12</sup> Haaretz Editorial Oct 02, 2015.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/sep/09/british-palestine-sovereign-state-netanyahu-israel>

<sup>14</sup> [http://issuu.com/acnusa/docs/250532\\_-\\_acn\\_executive\\_report\\_us\\_pr](http://issuu.com/acnusa/docs/250532_-_acn_executive_report_us_pr)