

Recognising Israel as a Jewish State

David Cameron, visiting Israel on March 19th, urged the Israelis and Palestinians 'to take the final difficult steps towards peace. The prize could be great: a stable, prosperous Middle East with a sovereign and viable Palestinian state living in peace alongside a secure Israel at the heart of it.'

On the ground not many people in the region believe those steps will be taken and even fewer believe that peace and security will be the end result. On 12th March, US Secretary of State John Kerry that the level of mistrust between Israelis and Palestinians was the highest he had ever seen. But he insisted that he was hopeful of reaching 'some kind of understanding of the road forward' as he seeks to nail down a framework to guide the stuttering Middle East peace talks. The major blocks to agreement remain the question of the Palestinian refugees, the status of Jerusalem, claimed by both sides as their capital, and security questions, particularly over the Jordan Valley.

Another issue is that the Palestinians should recognise Israel as a Jewish state. Prime Minister Netanyahu has said that without such a recognition there will be no deal with the Palestinians, a view supported by the overwhelming majority of Israelis. Speaking in Washington on March 4th Netanyahu said, 'In recognising the Jewish state you Palestinians would finally make clear that you are truly prepared to end the conflict. So recognise the Jewish state, no excuses, no delays. It is time.'

However on March 7th PA President Abbas said that recognising Israel as a Jewish state is 'out of the question,' a decision unanimously endorsed by the Revolutionary Council of Palestinian Authority and by the council of the Arab League. He said in his speech to delegates 'They are pressing and saying, 'no peace without the Jewish state.' There is no way. We will not accept.' In the same speech he said there is 'no way' he would accept anything less than the entire city of Jerusalem in any final peace deal.

He has said that the PLO recognised the existence of Israel when it signed the Oslo Accords in 1993. However it is clear from what he and others have said is that this means they merely recognise that a state called Israel exists, not that they recognise the right of Israel to exist.

What is the significance of this issue? From the Israeli side, Palestinian recognition of the State of Israel as a Jewish state means accepting that Israel is the national homeland of the Jewish people and that they have the right to have their own state in Israel. This means accepting Israel's Law of Return, passed in 1950, which gives the right to every Jew in the world to settle in the land of Israel as a new immigrant. At the same time it means that the Palestinian refugees (and their descendants) will not be able to return to Israel. According to UNRWA figures the number of Palestinian refugees in 2012 was estimated to be 4,950,000. Such numbers returning to Israel would mean the end of Israel as a Jewish majority state.

Mr Abbas said recognising Israel as a Jewish state would amount to a 'betrayal of his people's cause.' He represents Fatah, which is the main political party of the PLO. The Palestinian National Covenant, the charter of the PLO, written in 1964 denied the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish state and calls for its replacement with a Palestinian State

from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. The charter declares that the establishment of Israel is 'null and void' (Article 17) and calls 'for the liquidation of the Zionist presence in Palestine' (Articles 15 and 22).

On Israel as a Jewish state it says: 'The claims of historic and spiritual ties between Jews and Palestine are not in agreement with the facts of history or with the true basis of sound statehood. Judaism, because it is a divine religion, is not a nationality with independent existence. Furthermore, the Jews are not one people with an independent personality because they are citizens to their states.' (Article 18).

This article denies that the Jews are a people and that they have a historic tie to Palestine (Israel). After signing the Oslo Accords in 1993 Yasser Arafat sent a letter saying that 'those articles of the Palestinian Covenant which deny Israel's right to exist ... are now inoperative and no longer valid.' It was widely reported in the media that in the light of this the Covenant had been changed. But in reality no change has been made. You can still find the Covenant unchanged on the Palestinian Authority's website.

The Palestinian Authority (PA) has never changed its rejection of the Jewish right to the land of Palestine / Israel. Since its establishment in 1994 it has used its channels of communication, including television, education and culture to de-legitimise Israel and deny the right of the Jewish people to the land. PA schoolbook's teach that 'Palestine's war [in 1948] ended with a catastrophe that is unprecedented in history, when the Zionist gangs stole Palestine... and established the so-called State of Israel.' PA TV teaches 8-year-olds that all of Israel is 'occupied land' since 1948 - and this situation is only temporary: 'We will never forget that we have land that was occupied in 1948 which will return to us one day.' (Official PA TV, February 23, 2013).

Ithamar Marcus is an Israeli who runs Palestinian Media Watch (PMW), which tapes all of official Palestinian TV, and reads the Palestinian newspapers every day. He found that the PA continues to demonise Israel and deny its right to exist, teaching their children hatred against Jews, and ultimately violence against Jews and Israelis.

Marcus and his team have discovered that the PA's de-legitimation of Israel goes to the most extraordinary lengths. 'Abbas defined Jewish history in Jerusalem as a 'delusional myth' and claimed that Israel is trying to invent a Jewish history 'by brute force.' (Official PA TV, January 17, 2014). Abbas has a long tradition of denying Jewish history. In another talk he described Jewish history in Jerusalem as 'illusions and legends' and referred to the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem as the 'alleged Temple,' a term the PA uses to deny that it ever existed. (*Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, August 22, 2012). On numerous occasions when archeological finds with Jewish symbols and Hebrew texts were uncovered that illustrate aspects of Jewish history in Israel, the PA hastened to tell Palestinians that Israel invented the story, distorted it or even planted the finds. When Israeli archeologists last year displayed gold artifacts with Jewish symbols, such as a menorah and a shofar, found 50 meters from the Western Wall in Jerusalem, former PA prime minister Ahmed Qurei immediately denied its authenticity on official PA TV: 'I think all this is a forgery, forgery of the truth. It's all an attempt to make claims. They did not find anything.' (Official PA TV, September 11, 2013). Abbas has also denied Jesus' Jewish identity, calling him: 'a Palestinian messenger who would become a guiding light for millions around the world.'

The PA has denied that the holocaust really happened, saying that claims of 6 million Jews being slaughtered in the holocaust are a fiction invented to create the need to establish 'this entity (Israel), implanted as a cancer in our country.' PA TV, 29 November 2000.

While denying the real holocaust, they have called for a new holocaust, portraying the Jews as evil and Judaism as a racist, murder-promoting religion. The call to fight Jews solely because of their ethnicity is widespread. Senior Palestinian official Abbas Zaki said in an interview broadcast on official PA TV on March 12th 2014 that Israelis 'have no belief, no principles' and that they 'are an advanced instrument of evil.' Therefore, 'Allah will gather them so that we can kill them.' Zaki is a close associate of Mahmoud Abbas in the Palestinian Authority.

A number of Muslim preachers have called for the slaughter of Jews in their sermons in the mosques, some of which have been broadcast on PA TV. They often quote the Hadith, a tradition attributed to Mohammed: "The Hour [Resurrection] will not take place until the Muslims fight the Jews, and kill them. And the Jews will hide behind the rock and tree, and the rock and tree will say: 'O Muslim, O servant of Allah, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him!'" Sahih Muslim, vol. 4, 2238-39.

In the light of this it is hardly surprising that the idea of recognising Israel as a Jewish state is off limits to the Palestinian Authority. In reality they do not accept the existence of Israel on any level. They may go through the motions of signing an agreement with Israel in order to get their Palestinian state, but this is only a first step in the ultimate goal, which is the elimination of Israel.

The Israeli PM Netanyahu is determined to prevent the elimination of Israel from taking place. At the UN General Assembly in September he declared: 'In our time the Biblical prophecies are being realized. As the prophet Amos said, they shall rebuild ruined cities and inhabit them. They shall plant vineyards and drink their wine. They shall till gardens and eat their fruit. And I will plant them upon their soil never to be uprooted again. Ladies and gentlemen, the people of Israel have come home never to be uprooted again.'

In appealing to the Bible, Netanyahu pointed to the source of Israel's hope and right to the land. The Bible contradicts the Palestinian narrative given above. It affirms the Jewish people's historic connection to the land of Israel, confirmed by the covenant God made with Abraham, that He would give to Abraham and his descendants through Isaac and Jacob, the title deeds of ownership of the land. Centuries of Jewish history in the land of the Bible are confirmed by the historical accounts in the Bible and by archaeological discoveries showing that the Jewish people lived there, speaking Hebrew and worshipping the God of Israel, during the time when God was with them in the land of Israel, speaking to them through His prophets. The New Testament is set in the land of Israel (the word Palestine never appears in its text, but the word Israel or Israelite appears 74 times). It presents Jesus as the Jewish Messiah coming as both Son of Man and Son of God to redeem us from our sins as prophesied by Isaiah and other Hebrew prophets. The Gospels make the Jewish identity of Jesus plain. The anti-Jewish prejudice that came into later Christianity is actually a denial of the message of the

Gospel. For more on this send for our article 'Has the church replaced Israel?'

Both Old and New Testaments do speak of a dispersion of the Jewish people from the land of Israel, but they also point to a restoration of the Jewish people to the Lord and to the land: 'Hear the word of the Lord, o ye nations and declare it in the isles afar off and say 'He who scattered Israel will gather him and keep him as a shepherd does his flock.' Jeremiah 31.10. .

Even in the lands of dispersion the Jewish people would remain a people before the Lord. Jeremiah goes on to say: 'Thus says the Lord, who gives the sun for a light by day, the ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, who disturbs the sea, and its waves roar (The Lord of hosts is His name): 'If those ordinances depart from before Me, says the Lord, then the seed of Israel shall also cease from being a nation before Me forever.' Jeremiah 31.35-6.

By this promise God made it clear that the Jewish people would never cease to be a people as long as the earth remains, though they have been scattered from their land for many centuries. The same people who have been scattered from the land will be regathered from the north, south, east and west in the last days of this age. 'He will set up a banner for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.' Isaiah 11.12. This speaks of a return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel and therefore means that God does want there to be a 'Jewish state of Israel.'

These are just some of the many scriptures which speak of the return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel in the last days (for more on this see our article 'Modern Israel and Bible Prophecy' in the summer 2013 edition of Light for the Last Days – available on request). Of course these are verses taken from the Bible, which does not cut much ice with the majority Muslim population of the PA and the Middle East. Muslims are taught that the Bible has been changed by Jews and Christians (although there is nothing in the Koran which says this and evidence of manuscripts of both Old and New Testaments shows that this is not true),

There have been attempts by some Muslim scholars to say that the Koran recognises the Jewish link to Israel. The Jewish Chronicle carried an article 'What the Koran says about the land of Israel' (19/3/09) quoting Sheikh Dr Muhammad Al-Husseini: 'You will find very clearly that the traditional commentators from the eighth and ninth century onwards have uniformly interpreted the Koran to say explicitly that Eretz Yisrael has been given by God to the Jewish people as a perpetual covenant.' Dr Al-Husseini is a British imam who teaches a course on the Koran as part of interfaith studies at the Leo Baeck College, the Progressive rabbinic college in Finchley, north London. One of the texts he has taught is the following verse in the Koran (5:21), 'O my people! Enter the Holy Land which God has decreed for you, and turn back on your heels otherwise you will be overturned as losers.'

Professor Abdul Hadi Palazzi, Director of the Cultural Institute of the Italian Islamic Community in Rome, has written that the Koran says that Allah gave the land of Israel to the Jews and will restore them to it at the end of days. He quotes this verse from the Koran: 'Pharoah sought to scare them [the Israelites] out of the land [of Israel]: but We

[Allah] drowned him [Pharaoh] together with all who were with him. Then We [Allah] said to the Israelites: 'Dwell in this land [the Land of Israel]. When the promise of the hereafter [End of Days] comes to be fulfilled, We [Allah] shall assemble you [the Israelites] all together [in the Land of Israel].' Koran, 'Night Journey,' chapter 17:100-104.

On the basis of this he concludes his article: 'After reviewing the relevant Koranic passages concerning this matter ... there is no reason for Muslims to deny the State of Israel - which is a JEWISH state - complete sovereignty over Jerusalem.'

This is a minority position completely at variance with the interpretation given by the overwhelming majority of Muslims in the Middle East. The majority quote other verses from the Koran and the Hadith, showing a negative attitude towards the Jews. In Shari'a (Islamic law), which is based on the Koran and Hadith, Jews, like all non-Muslims, are assigned a status of inferiority that does not permit their becoming rulers over Muslims or over Muslim territory.

The Hamas charter asserts that 'the Islamic Resistance Movement [i.e. Hamas] regards Palestine as an Islamic Waqf consecrated for future generations until Judgment Day.' This reflects the Muslim view that once a country has been Islamic it should remain Islamic until the end of days. In an Islamic society Muslims should rule and Jews and Christians may be permitted to maintain their communities but only as dependent 'dhimmi' citizens. They are required to show their inferior status to Muslims by paying the *jizya*, a poll tax levied upon the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) under Islamic rule. According to this view the Jewish state of Israel is a reversal of the march of history. It must be removed and the land returned to Muslim rule.

The Bible does indicate that there will be this denial of Israel's right to exist. In Psalm 83 speaks of a time when the surrounding nations (including Philistia / Palestinians) will say 'Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more.' Although scripture says that their attempts to destroy Israel will end in failure, end time prophecies make it clear that there will be a huge challenge to Israel's existence which will have a world wide dimension. Ezekiel 38-9 prophesies a time when an alliance of nations, including Persia (Iran) come against Israel and are defeated by divine intervention 'on the mountains of Israel.'

Daniel 9.27 and Isaiah 28.14-22 imply a false peace process which does not lead to peace but to a time of trouble when Israel makes a 'covenant with death' based on lies and falsehood (Isaiah 28.15). The focal point of this process will be the status of Jerusalem which is described as being 'a burdensome stone for all nations' (Zechariah 12.12-3). On the basis of Daniel 9.27 it is believed that this will be a seven year peace agreement which will not lead to peace, but to the 'time of Jacob's trouble': 'Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.' Jeremiah 30.7.

Israel's salvation will come through the Messiah Yeshua / Jesus, who is Israel's Saviour and who will come the second time. At that time Zechariah prophesies: 'And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him

as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.’
Zechariah 12.10.

Jesus the Messiah is the one who has been ‘pierced’ when He died by crucifixion, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah concerning the Suffering Servant Messiah: ‘He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.’ Isaiah 53.3-6. He is the one to whom Israel should look in its present time of need.

When He comes again Jesus will do more than recognize Israel as a Jewish state. He will save those in Israel who look to Him at the time of the last battle for Jerusalem. He will gather the remaining exiles from the north, south, east and west to the land, He will cause the Temple to be rebuilt in Jerusalem and rule the nations in peace and justice from Mount Zion in the renewed and restored earth which God will bring into being in the Messianic kingdom. He will judge the world in righteousness and remove the wicked from the earth, bringing peace to the nations: ‘He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.’ Isaiah 2.1-4. See also Isaiah 11-12, 35, Ezekiel 40-48, Zechariah 14, Revelation 20).

He will also bring peace and blessing to Israel and her Arab neighbours who accept the salvation He is offering: ‘In that day Israel will be one of three with Egypt and Assyria—a blessing in the midst of the land (or the earth), whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, ‘Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance.’ (Isaiah 19.24-25).

Maranatha! May the Lord come soon!