

BDS: What Does It Really Stand For?

Recently, I wrote of attacks Israel was facing on two fronts, both threatening Israel's physical existence each in its own way. Writing from Israel as an Orthodox Jew, sharing perspectives largely with a Christian audience, I am mindful not to commit three main transgressions.

The first is not to be offensive to Christians (or anyone else for that matter) in sharing a perspective from Israel that may be different and through the eyes of an Orthodox Jew.

The second is not to overly portray Israel as a country under siege or as a people constantly threatened and in need. Some do this deliberately for their own agendas. While one cannot diminish the actual threats that we face, Israel is a thriving, blessed country, and to diminish that paints a picture that's not accurate in the least.

The third is not to commit the sin of the spies Moses sent to scout the land. They reported largely accurately but with twisted reality, and I try to present accurate reports that might not be heard outside Israel to allow others to be informed, assess and draw conclusions.

I say this because it's been on my heart for months to write about another threat that's widespread, international and growing. Yet I don't want my reports to be seen as all about how much we are at risk. This particular threat undermines Israel's very legitimacy. It's also based on profound lies, affirming the famous Nazi notion that if you repeat a lie often enough, it becomes the truth.

Some may be familiar with this scourge, and many probably not at all. It bears calling out so that good people of faith and conscience can stand up to it, call it the lie that it is and

confront its insidious nature. Many Christian Zionists have stepped up, calling it what it is; some are good friends of mine who make me proud and grateful.

I am writing about the BDS movement, an anti-Israel group that actively promotes *boycotting* Israel, *divestment* from Israel and placing *sanctions* upon Israel.

On my most recent trip to the U.S., I was privileged to speak at an event organized by Aglow International in Charleston, S.C. Given Aglow's unique position of putting support for Israel up front as a central pillar of its ministry, it was fitting to address this challenge. As part of my remarks, I shared:

"The BDS movement is uniquely hateful and anti-Semitic because while they claim to have an agenda of being pro-Palestinian, what's clear is they want to eliminate Israel, their sense of social righteousness begins and ends at the borders of Israel, they blame all the problems of Palestinian Arabs on Israel, they disregard the qualitative ways in which Palestinian Arabs are benefited by Israel, and they turn a blind eye to how the same Palestinian Arabs they say they seek to help are persecuted and discriminated against in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, the Gulf states and other places.

"While they have branded themselves under the acronym *BDS*, they also call for the 'Palestinian right of return,' which means flooding Israel with millions of Arabs—the children, grandchildren and even great-grandchildren of those who left Israel in 1948.

"Not only is it wrong, but also their hatred clouds their logic, and the boycott they call for hurts both Israelis and Palestinian Arabs. But that reality is too inconvenient and doesn't help make their case.

"Recently there have been some successes against this 'theology.' Despite these hopeful signs, the reality is that

there are no shortage of people who lose all sense of logic and jump on board BDS enthusiastically.

“Let us be clear: BDS is only about *bald-faced lies, deception and slander*.

“However, as we gather together today, Jews and Christians united by Israel but also around our common belief in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, a shared biblical tradition, restoring a relationship that had simply been hijacked over the centuries, I would like to propose a new model that I hope will carry this relationship forward until the day in our lifetime when the only thing remarkable about an event such as this is that they are completely commonplace.

“I’d like to propose that we rebrand *BDS* and take ownership of it, based on the fellowship of this gathering and many others that take place like it, and that hereafter *BDS* will stand for *brotherhood, decency and solidarity*.

“Let us commit that when we hear or see the three letters *BDS*, we affirm our standing together, united and determined. Let us commit to share this reality with others and beat the haters at their own game.”

The following week, in Washington, Prime Minister Netanyahu echoed these thoughts, saying:

“The BDS movement ... should be opposed because they’re bad for peace and because BDS is just plain wrong. Most people in the BDS movement don’t seek a solution of two states for two peoples. On the contrary, they openly admit that they seek the dissolution of the only state for the Jewish people. They’re not seeking peace.

“The opposite is true. BDS sets back peace because it hardens Palestinian positions and it makes mutual compromise less likely. ...

“BDS is morally wrong. It turns morality on its head. This is the main point. And I can tell you, it’s not that Israel, like all states, is not beyond criticism. We have a boisterous democracy where everyone has an opinion.

“But the BDS movement is not about legitimate criticism. It’s about making Israel illegitimate. It presents a distorted and twisted picture of Israel. ... BDS is ... a farce. Here’s why: In dozens of countries, academics are imprisoned for their beliefs. So the universities of which country does BDS want to sanction and boycott? Israel—the one country in the Middle East where professors can say, write and teach what they want.

“Throughout the Middle East, Christians are fleeing for their lives. So which country does BDS want churches to divest from? Israel, the one country in the Middle East that protects Christians and protects the right of worship for everyone.

“Today the singling out of the Jewish people has turned into the singling out of the Jewish state ... attempts to boycott, divest and sanction Israel, the most threatened democracy on earth, are simply the latest chapter in the long and dark history of anti-Semitism. Those who wear the BDS label should be treated exactly as we treat any anti-Semite or bigot. They should be exposed and condemned. The boycotters should be boycotted.

“Everyone should know what the letters *BDS* really stand for: *bigotry, dishonesty and shame.*”

I will be pleased to share the full text of my remarks in Charleston, as well as links to the writing of Christians who share this biblical perspective. I will also be pleased to share these and other insights personally during upcoming trips to the U.S. I will be even more pleased if my words inspire others to learn and understand about this threat we face and unite to stand against them.

Let us stand together for brotherhood, decency and solidarity,

as a beacon for what is right and a light to those living in the darkness.

Jonathan Feldstein is the director of Heart to Heart, a unique virtual blood donation program to bless Israel and save lives in Israel. Born and educated in the U.S., Feldstein emigrated to Israel in 2004. He is married and the father of six. Throughout his life and career, he has been blessed by the calling to fellowship with Christian supporters of Israel and shares experiences of living as an Orthodox Jew in Israel. He writes a regular column for Charisma's Standing With Israel. You can contact Jonathan at firstpersonisrael@.