

Has Israel Risked Becoming an Apartheid State?

Secretary of State John Kerry's recent remarks to the Trilateral Commission have created a great deal of controversy. At the very least, the issues of intent and timing are troubling.

Here is the big question: Did he truly believe that his comments made behind closed doors would not become a part of public record, or was he testing the waters to see how this idea would play out among the American people? In either case, thanks to release of the recorded speech by *The Daily Beast*, we now know that across the political spectrum there is concern and in many cases anger.

Among those who consider themselves friends of Israel, the racial connotations and historical realities associated with the term *apartheid* make this an especially bitter pill to swallow. Kerry's use of this term is puzzling because in the past, President Obama has been careful to note that apartheid does not apply to Israel's treatment of the Palestinians.

Two possibilities come to mind. First, it could be that the secretary of state acted without White House approval. At best, that appears to be extremely doubtful. In light of former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's description of Israel's proposal to build housing in Jerusalem as "an insult to the United States," a more likely scenario would be that this is a mile marker on President Obama's path to yet another evolution in his thinking.

As I think over this development in the relationship between America and the only true friend that we have in the Middle East, I am struck by the fact that even though we share a common religious heritage, almost all the ensuing discussion

has focused on secular standards for evaluation of actions. A partial list of consequences includes United Nations approval or disapproval, the possibilities of sanctions or other punishments against Israel, or an increase in Palestinian violence if Israel does not capitulate to the demands of the United States.

All of this seems to be coupled with the belief that a comprehensive final agreement must be reached before the Obama administration leaves office in 2017. Interestingly, almost all of our recent presidents seemed to share this same obsession and connect it to their time in office. Therefore, it is only fair to question whether the top priority is about finding a lasting solution or building a legacy.

If it is truly about finding a lasting solution, an entirely different approach must be taken. We have grown accustomed to thinking that Israel needs us. As a result, it has become easy for us to increase our demands for them to do things our way or suffer the consequences.

At the center of everything is the issue of land. Since the rebirth of the nation in 1948, the proposed solution presented to Israel seldom varies. Underlying every discussion is the belief that Israel must return the land that is being unlawfully occupied.

From a secular standpoint, that is a very logical assumption. However, from a spiritual standpoint, it is not realistic. Israel, unlike any other nation, was supernaturally birthed. God promised Abraham and his descendants a land in which they could dwell (Gen. 15:18; Ezek. 48:1-29).

Menachem Begin, a former prime minister of Israel, clearly understood Israel's divine origins and referred to this gift of land as the oldest recorded deed in the world. The present prime minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, builds upon this truth by connecting the rebirth of Israel in 1948 with God's

original intent as revealed to Abraham. On Oct. 1, 2013, in a speech at the United Nations, he quoted from Amos 9:14-15 and declared that biblical prophecies are now being fulfilled.

Based upon the actions of America's leaders in recent years, it is unrealistic, if not delusional, to believe that the existing secular standards for dealing with Israel will be replaced by what I feel to be spiritual or biblical standards. That does not give us a free pass to say that there is nothing we can do and then quit trying. In God's promise to Abraham and his descendants, three guiding principles are listed (Gen. 12:3):

- I will bless those who bless you.
- I will curse him who curses you.
- In you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

Every follower of Christ has been the recipient of the third principle. Through the descendants of Abraham, we received our Bible and the marvelous gift of salvation in Jesus Christ.

To understand the second principle, one only needs to look at the historical debris of those persons and nations who have made the mistake of cursing God's chosen people. That leaves us with only one principle to consider. On May 14, 1948, when President Harry Truman made the decision to recognize the newly formed state of Israel, he was standing with those past American presidents who supported Israel's right to someday return to their homeland. At the same time, he was laying a foundation for us to experience the unprecedented blessings that we have enjoyed for nearly 66 years.

Among persons or nations, a change in direction or a recalibration of purpose does not simply happen. Invariably, it is preceded by a plan of action. In response to John Kerry's recent ill-advised remarks, we have a choice: We can join the controversy, make improper remarks and become a part of the problem, or we can be part of the solution.

As I see it, there are four positive things that need to be done:

1. Pray for our leaders. By this, I mean that we must pray for them to have spiritual revelation, be convicted of unrighteous actions and be made aware of God's divine power.
2. In the spirit of Psalm 122, pray for the peace of Jerusalem.
3. Make every effort to influence the policy makers in Washington. Let your desires be known by voting, writing letters and sending emails. Simply put, be certain that your elected officials know how you feel about the encroaching secularism in our nation.
4. Take the time to teach those around you about our marvelous Judeo-Christian heritage. As a result of historical revision, it is not being taught in the public schools or state owned colleges and universities.

Concerned about the welfare of the church during very difficult times, Paul reminded Timothy that he had not been given a spirit of paralyzing timidity (2 Tim. 1:7). There is no reason for us to believe that reality has changed.

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