

Mac Hammond Recounts 'Surreal' Israel Experience During Hamas Skirmish

When my wife, Lynne, and I decided to take 28 pastors on their first tour of Israel, we did so believing that the experience would not only deepen their understanding of their spiritual heritage, but also strengthen their commitment to Israel's welfare as a nation.

We did *not* realize, however, the degree to which our love and support of the Jewish people would escalate by a shared experience of the violence they face on a regular basis.

It happened when we arrived in Jerusalem on Friday, Nov. 16. It was early evening, and the Jewish people had begun celebrating Shabbat. Our group went down to the Wall and plaza area, which was filled with Jews who had come to pray.

Each of us soaked in the experience of seeing this place bustling with passion and rich with history. About 30 minutes after arriving, the atmosphere abruptly changed when the sound of air raid sirens filled the air and police yelled instructions to the masses, hurrying them to protected areas.

Everyone packed tightly together in the designated shelters—hundreds of people, some praying, some crying, some consoling the most distraught—until the all clear finally came.

As you know, Israel was recently engaged in a campaign to stop the Hamas rockets. Hamas is the terrorist Jihadist regime that controls the Gaza strip. They have attacked Israel with more than 12,000 rockets in the past 13 years, and 180 in the past four weeks, which led to the decision that Israel must take action for the safety of its citizens. Since then, more than

400 more have been launched into Israel from Gaza.

This threat from Hamas is only one of many in a tight ring of threats around the nation. On its most northern border, an insane Islamic fundamentalist militia, Hezbollah, controls Lebanon armed with a Jihadist culture of suicide. They are ready to launch its 10,000 rockets on Israel on any given day. In the northeast Golan Heights border, Israel faces a collapsing regime in Syria. On the east, Jordanian riots are beginning to gain momentum. To the south, Israel faces Egypt, which has recently fallen into the hands of the "Islamic Brotherhood." The change of leadership threatens the peace treaty from 1978 signed in Camp David. Further to the east, Israel faces the fundamentalist Islamic regime in Iran, which is publicly committed to a nuclear program aimed at "wiping Israel off the face of the earth."

To witness firsthand in Jerusalem what Israel experiences regularly was surreal and sobering. Now, more than ever, we are confronted with the need to pray for an unprecedented awakening of our nation. The failed "land for peace" culture or the notion of "moral equivalency" in settling the conflict must be purged from the American psyche.

All peace agreements and treaties that have been signed in the Middle East have left Israel vulnerable to ever-growing threats. Ignoring this simple fact is dangerous for us as a nation and unfair to our only true ally in the Middle East. Overwhelming strength is the only answer to terrorism.

I call on the clergy and leaders of America to do some serious soul searching as they remember our Hebraic roots and Judeo-Christian identity. The body of Christ must first unite in prayer for a national awakening, and become unrelenting in our effort to educate and influence our populace. This will not happen until we come together in sufficient numbers to gain national visibility. I believe God has called Christians United for Israel together for that purpose in this day.

Prayerfully consider involvement in CUFI.

Israel is the Jews' biblical homeland. The world cannot toss aside the overwhelming evidence of history and archaeology that validate this scriptural truth, unless we remain silent. We must teach and preach that supporting Israel is not only an American thing to do; it is the Christian thing to do.

Mac Hammond is senior pastor of Living Word Christian Center, a large and growing church in a suburb of Minneapolis. He hosts the Winner's Way broadcast and is the author of several books.