

## Peace in the Holy Land

### Does Israel's "intransigence" stand in its way?

Many hope and believe that at long last peace in the Holy Land may be at hand. And that if it were not for Israel's intransigence, for its unwillingness to make "concessions," peace could have been attained long ago.

#### What are the facts?

**Endlessly repeated myths.** The myth that Israel's "occupation of Arab lands" is the root cause of the conflict is just that – a myth! Arabs have been slaughtering Jews long before the "occupation," long before the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. In 1929, for instance, Arabs killed 133 Jews and wounded 399 in Hebron. Those who were not killed fled, making the city, where Jews had lived for centuries, *judenrein*. The Mufti of Jerusalem met in 1941 with Adolf Hitler and declared his kinship with Nazi Germany because "we have the same enemy as Germany, namely the Jews."

Palestine, which incorporated what is now the Kingdom of Jordan, had been part of the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire for centuries. After World War I, Britain was given the Mandate over Palestine, which, in accordance with the Balfour Declaration, was to be the homeland for the Jewish people. This was formalized by the League of Nations and by the 52 nations that comprised it. In 1922, in violation of its Mandate, the British severed all the lands east of the Jordan River – 80 per cent of the Mandate – and gave it to the Arabs who, under the Hashemite rulers, created the Kingdom of Jordan. The Jews acquiesced to this betrayal. Britain finally relinquished its Mandate in 1947 and turned its responsibility over to the United Nations. They came up with a partition plan, by which the Arab sector was to be a contiguous land mass and the Jewish sector three discontinuous pieces. Jerusalem, located in the very center of the Arab sector, was to be "internationalized." Most of the Jewish sector was the desolate Negev desert. The Jews accepted this plan. But the Arabs rejected it out of hand and invaded the nascent Jewish state with the armies of six nations. It cost thousands of lives and caused over 650,000 Arabs to flee. Had the Arabs compromised, they would now have had their state since 1948.

**Unending Arab aggression.** In the Six-Day War of 1967, Israel again defeated the combined Arab might and remained in possession and administration of the Golan Heights, of Gaza, of Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank"), of the Gaza Strip and of the entire city of Jerusalem. Israel

had no intention of staying in possession of these territories. It waited for the Arabs to make proposals for peace, but that was not forthcoming. On the contrary, the Arab League met at Khartoum and promulgated their "three no's": no peace with Israel, no negotiation with Israel, and no recognition of Israel.

On Yom Kippur of 1973, Egypt and Syria once again attacked Israel. And again, the heroic people of Israel defeated the combined Arab armies and drove across the Suez Canal and to within miles of Cairo. In the aftermath of that war, Egypt's president Anwar Sadat came to

Jerusalem and spoke to the Knesset, Israel's parliament. He offered a peace treaty, but imposed very tough conditions, among others, the return of the entire Sinai, with the cities that

Israel had built; the return of the oil fields that Israel had developed (and which would have made it energy-independent for the foreseeable future); and relinquishing the strategic mountain passes and early warning systems that protected Israel against any future attack. It was the first time in recorded history that the vanquished imposed conditions on the victor. In what was obviously a major act of folly, and once again in its incessant quest for peace, Israel agreed to recognize the murderous PLO, invited it back into Palestine from its exile in Tunis and signed the Oslo Accord, by which governmental authority was to be bestowed on the Palestinians. But instead of accepting the outstretched hand of peace, the Palestinians launched their "intifadas," which have cost thousands of lives and which have left the Palestinians impoverished and with their economy in shambles.

The above is a mere outline of the "peace process." In 2000, under the stewardship of President Clinton, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak made unprecedented concessions for the sake of peace: 98 per cent of the land that the Palestinians requested, control over most areas of eastern Jerusalem, and authority over the Temple Mount. To the dismay of Clinton, Arafat curtly rejected this dramatic offer, under the pretext that Israel would not accept the "return of the refugees." That would have spelled the end of Israel as a Jewish state.

Israel's "intransigence?" No way! At every turn in this almost 100-year strife, Israel has offered compromises and concessions. The current folly, withdrawing from Gaza, is the latest example of that. Arabs, whose almost exclusive concern is the destruction of Israel, are the cause for this ongoing bloodletting and this unending war. Unless and until that mindset changes, things will not improve. But such a change of mindset does not appear on the horizon.

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