

Time Changes Things Concerning the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

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Introduction

Time changes things. What I mean is that conditions change with time. It's certainly true of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Since 1990, when my book *Palestine Is Coming: The Revival of Ancient of Philistia* was published, this conflict has changed considerably. And it has changed in the direction that I say in my book that it would change. Thus, this book is much more relevant now than when it was published, in 1990. The purpose of this article is to document these changes and to show how they relate to the New Philistia Proposal which I set forth in this book for solving this conflict.

Palestine Is Coming is a three-part book about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that is divided into the past, present, and future. The "Coming Future" is the thesis of the book. In it, I interpret ten prophecies in the Jewish Bible which I believe show that a Gentile state will exist on the coastal plain between Tel Aviv and Egypt in the latter years preceding what the Bible calls "the end of days" or "world to come." For Jews, this language means the end of the period which precedes the messianic era. For Christians, the end of days occurs when the righteous dead are raised and Jesus returns to establish his kingdom of peace.

The Two-State Solution

Throughout the second half of the 20th century, both Israel and the U.S. were opposed to a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. (Called "partition," it means "two states for two peoples," in which Israel would remain a Jewish state.) This was despite the fact that when the UK had the Palestine Mandate, from 1922 to 1948, it sent its blue-ribbon Peel Commission to Palestine to analyze the conflict. It opposed her majesty's government by concluding that the only viable remedy was two separate states involving a transfer of populations. And the 1947 UN Partition Plan advocated this solution.

For a long time, a large majority of Americans and their federal government were opposed to a two-state solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In fact, Jew Henry Kissinger, while U.S. Secretary of State, promised Israel the U.S. would not recognize or negotiate with the PLO unless it accepted Israel's existence. Later, President Jimmy Carter's ambassador to the UN,

Andrew Young, seemingly broke this “Kissinger Commitment.” While at the UN, Young inadvertently spoke to a PLO member. Due to political pressure mostly from Israel, Young had to resign his post even though there was no U.S. law against it.

But time changes things. By the turn of the century, the failure of the U.S. as the peace broker in solving this conflict was causing sentiments in both the U.S. and Israel to switch. Finally, in June, 2002, George W. Bush became the first U.S. president to announce that he favored a two-state solution to the conflict. Exactly seven years later, U.S. President Barak Obama said the same in a major speech directed largely toward the Arab world. And on May, 2011, President Obama announced that the final agreement should be based on pre-1967 borders with mutually-agreed land swaps. The EU quickly agreed. By 2013, polls in both the U.S. and Israel revealed that at least 75% of those populations preferred a two-state solution.

My Involvement with “The Fellowship”

I became interested in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in about 1980. It happened because, twenty years earlier, when I was an eighteen year-old college freshman at the University of Houston, Jim Hiskey, a staff member of the new Campus Crusade for Christ (CCC), an evangelistic para-church organization, invited me to one of their weekend retreats. The two keynote speakers were Bob Thieme, the pastor of Berachah Church that I had begun attending, and Hal Lindsey, who ten years later authored the blockbuster, bestselling book entitled *The Late Great Planet Earth*. Lindsey spoke on Bible prophecy, and I was profoundly moved due to the primary theme of his message. It was that the reestablishment of Israel in 1948, after 1800 years of non-existence, was a fulfillment of Bible prophecy.

That evening, I experienced something unlike anything thereafter in my life. Somehow, I wound up in an eight-hour, all-night prayer vigil with eleven other male college students. Until then, I had never prayed out loud with a group of people. Toward the end of this holy prayer marathon, we each agreed to make a promise to God about something we would do for him for the rest of our lives. With all of us sitting in a circle, I pondered what I was going to pray. For a while, I didn't have a clue. Then, when it came my turn to pray, I promised God I would seriously study Bible prophecy for the rest of my life.

It happened. For many years after that, each year I studied either the book of Daniel or the book of Revelation in the Bible, and I would read commentaries on them. In the late 1980s, I became an author. By 2009, I had six theological books published, three of which are on Bible prophecy. I have a nonfiction series of books on Bible prophecy that is called STILL HERE. Ten books are planned in this series. I call it “A Nonfiction Alternative to *Left Behind* Theology” due to the mega-selling, ten-volume LEFT BEHIND series.

Babe and Jim Hiskey have been two of my closest Christian friends in my life. All three of us played on the golf team at the University of Houston. Jim was a three-time All-American while on three NCAA Championship teams. During the mid-1960s, he left CCC to join Dick Halverson and Doug Coe as leaders in The Fellowship, centered in Washington, DC. It is known mostly for aiding members of Congress in hosting the Presidential Prayer Breakfast. This annual affair is held in the nation's capitol in February and attended by the president, members of Congress, and thousands of dignitaries from around the world.

In 1965, Jim Hiskey suggested to his brother Babe and me, as new pros on the PGA Tour, that we start a Bible study for the pros and their wives. So, we did. Jim oversaw it periodically by visiting the Tour and our meetings. Thus, there was a rather indirect influence of The Fellowship on "the PGA Tour Bible Study," as it came to be called, during at least its first two decades. When I finished my full-time career on the regular PGA Tour, in 1982, Jim invited me to work with him part-time in the new Golf Fellowship ministry he was starting. I did that for the remainder of the 1980s. In 1987, Dick Halverson, who was then the Chaplain to the U.S. Senate (1981-1994), endorsed my first book as did Evangelist Billy Graham. My next book, *Palestine Is Coming*, was published in 1990. The next year, I resumed my pro golf career by competing full-time on the Senior/Champions Tour for the next ten years.

Senators Don Nichols and John Ensign

On September 11, 2001, Al-Qaeda attacked the U.S., killing about 3,000 people. Five weeks later, on October 16, I flew to Washington, D.C., to talk to some significant people about my book's proposal for solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I had done it eleven years prior, meeting some people and leaving copies of my book at dozens of offices of members of Congress. But I didn't get much of a response.

On October 18, 2001, I went with Jim Hiskey to the office of Senator Don Nichols (R-OK). They were friends and sometimes played golf together. I briefly presented my proposal to the senator. He said, "You're talking about the Promised Land." I explained that I was only proposing that Israel be located in the Jews' "ancestral land," as demanded in its Proclamation of Independence, not in the larger Promised Land. Don replied, "I believe Jews are entitled to all of the Promised Land now." It then became obvious to me that Mr. Nichols was a Christian Zionist and that he probably had been taught this viewpoint at his church in Oklahoma City. I explained that I didn't think Israel is entitled to all of the Promised Land until Jesus returns. We disagreed on this point, so Senator Nichols changed the subject.

Right after that meeting, Jim took me to C-Street House. It is a three-story house located near the congressional buildings on C-Street. It was donated years earlier to The Fellowship. They used it for the sole purpose of providing living quarters for members of Congress who commute back and forth from their home states and are associated with The Fellowship,

usually by participating in one or more weekly meetings for prayer and Bible study. An elderly couple, Joe and Gail Mitchell, were custodians of the house. Jim mentioned our meeting to them with Senator Nichols and its purpose. Gail didn't know of my book and was intrigued by it. Upon her request, I left copies of it for house guests.

Senator John Ensign (R-NV) was staying there at C-Street, though I didn't meet him. On November 16, 2001, he called my cell phone and said, "I read most of your book and found it fascinating." I asked him what he thought of trying to put together a forum in Washington, D.C., to discuss the book's proposal. He replied, "I've already thought of that and talked to some of my colleagues about it." I asked him what they said. The senator answered, "They said, 'we wouldn't touch it.'" I asked, "Why not." John said, "It's dangerous for us to talk about this." He meant it was politically too dangerous to discuss such an idea. Why? It was mostly because of the political strength of the American Israel Political Affairs Committee (AIPAC). This Jewish organization lobbies Congress on behalf of Israel's interests. AIPAC would strongly oppose my proposal because AIPAC was against any two-state solution.

Years later, the handsome Senator John Ensign was being considered for the Republican nomination for president. But in 2007-08, he became involved in an extra-marital affair that ended his political career.

Meeting with Middle East Analyst Judith Kipper

This time, Doug Coe's office set up an appointment for me with Anthony Cordesman, the chief national security analyst at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). Cordesman had worked in the federal government and NATO for many years and was now regarded as the top non-governmental analyst in the U.S. about certain important international conflicts, especially those in the Middle East.

I was scheduled to meet with Mr. Cordesman, on October 19. But the federal government announced that morning that all congressional buildings would be closed indefinitely due to a sudden anthrax scare which involved national security. So, Cordesman had to cancel our meeting due to much demand for him to be interviewed on television newscasts. Instead, it was arranged that I meet that afternoon for thirty minutes with Judith Kipper, a Middle East analyst with the Council on Foreign Relations.

After I briefly presented my proposal to Ms. Kipper, she replied, "You can't tell the Palestinians to get out of the West Bank." She explained that many of them claimed a "historical connection to that land dating back thousands of years." Of course, since I had written a book about this, I knew quite well what she was talking about. I asked her if she knew if the solution I was suggesting had ever been proposed. She answered, "No." My final

remark in support of my proposal was, “what if the Palestinians living in the West Bank were offered a better deal than they have there?” Ms. Kipper only shrugged. What could you say? It hadn’t happened yet. My point was that time changes things. And it soon did.

The West Bank Separation Barrier

Six months after I met with Ms. Kipper, on April 14, 2002, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s cabinet announced that “fences and other physical obstacles” would be constructed along or near the West Bank border, called “the Green Line,” to prevent unwanted Palestinians from entering Israel. (Previous Israeli prime ministers had discussed this barrier idea for years.) Construction of it began two months later, in June, 2002. The first phase, which stretches 108-miles long the northwestern West Bank, was completed in July, 2003. In late 2013, this 430-mile planned fence-wall barrier was nearly completed. Israel calls it the West Bank Separation Barrier. Statistics prove that it has done what Israel had predicted it would do—improve Israel’s security immensely.

Palestinians, on the other hand, call it “the apartheid wall.” It creates much hardship on Palestinians living near it, but especially those inside it. The UN soon opposed it and still does. A 2005 UN report entitled “The Humanitarian Impact of the West Bank Barrier on Palestinian Communities” states, “it is difficult to overstate the humanitarian impact of the Barrier. The route inside the West Bank severs communities, people’s access to services, livelihoods and religious and cultural amenities.” Due to these conditions, by 2013 many West Bank Palestinians reportedly say they would rather live somewhere else. So, instead of, “you can’t tell Palestinians to get out of the West Bank,” many West Bank Palestinians are now saying among themselves, “we need to get out of here.” My, how time changes things.

Palestinians Get the Gaza Strip

My book proposes that the Palestinian state be a very, enlarged Gaza Strip. Israel had possessed the Gaza Strip since the 1967 Six-Day War. But in 2005, Israel decided it had had enough of administering the chaotic Gaza Strip, which was packed full of Palestinians. So, Israel quickly dismantled its few Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip, withdrew from there, and unilaterally turned possession of it over to the Palestinians. So, for the first time, Palestinians had some land they could really call their own.

In 2006, Hamas won elections in the Gaza Strip. In 2007, Hamas violently ousted Fatah from the Gaza Strip to become its de facto government. Hamas and the Palestinian Authority were at odds from then on until signing a unity agreement in June, 2014.

So, as of this writing the only land Palestinians can call their own is the Gaza Strip. Besides the matter of transfer of populations, it seems that the easiest way to establish a Palestinian state would be to simply enlarge the Gaza Strip. Many authorities who advocate the standard two-state solution—in which the Palestinian state would be located in the West Bank and Gaza Strip—speak of “two states lying side-by-side.” But that would not really be the case, whereas a very, enlarged Gaza Strip as Palestine would lie beside an Israel that possesses all of the West Bank, just as Israel and Philistia were during antiquity.

Turmoil in the Northern Sinai Peninsula

In my book, I propose that Egypt forfeit to the Palestinians a small portion of the northern Sinai Peninsula. It would be that territory lying between the Gaza Strip and the Wadi el Arish and extending inland to the Shephelah and outskirts of Beersheba and Kadesh-Barnea. My reasons were that this region is unessential to Egypt and the Wadi el Arish was usually the northern border of ancient Egypt.

For twenty years after my book was published, there was no thought of this northern Sinai Peninsula region being separated from Egypt to become a part of the Gaza Strip. But in January, 2011, and as a part of Arab Spring, Egyptian protestors caused Egypt’s military to overthrow President Hosni Mubarak. After that, turmoil began to increase in Egypt’s northern Sinai Peninsula because Egyptian security could not attend to it. This turmoil occurred especially in the coastal region between the Gaza Strip and the city of El Arish, a distance of about twenty-five miles. (El Arish has a population of about 150,000 and is the governing city of the region.) The native Bedouin population of the northern Sinai was becoming dissatisfied with Egypt’s governing of this territory. And since then, there has been a significant influx of Islamic militants into this area. These militants claim that their goal for this region is to establish an “Islamic Emirate” in it. That is what Hamas has pretty much been doing in the Gaza Strip. These Islamic insurgents reportedly have been joined in their upheaval by some Palestinians from the Gaza Strip.

If this turmoil caused by these Islamic militants in the northern Sinai Peninsula continues, this region could become to Egypt what the Gaza Strip was to Israel until it finally relinquished the Gaza Strip to the Palestinians. Again, time will tell.

Comparing DNA from Philistine Skeletons with that of Palestinians.

Archaeologists have discovered Philistine corpses. I would like to see DNA of these corpses compared with DNA of modern Palestinians to see if they have any significant genetic link to ancient Philistines. If that happens, and there is a noticeable genetic link between these peoples, that would give Palestinians more of a right to claim “the land of the Philistines” as their ancestral land.

Time changes things concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. What else will change in the future? Only time will tell.