

TAKE BACK THE HOLY SITES

*By Michael Freund
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Note from pastor Kevin Lea: The world leaders, in their foolishness, have forced Israel to give the Gaza strip to the Palestinians. In doing so they have forced nine thousand Jews to become homeless and jobless. To keep the greenhouses from being destroyed by the Jewish government as part of the withdrawal agreement, some Jewish businessmen from America bought the greenhouses in the Gaza for 14 million dollars. It was their hope to then give them to the Palestinians as a gesture of peace and good will so they could immediately provide a living for 14,000 of their people. As a typical act of appreciation, the Muslim Arabs quickly destroyed these greenhouses, thus cutting their own throats, and proving to the naïve businessmen how foolish it is to try and make peace with people who serve the god of war and destruction, Allah.

Now these same world rulers have been meeting this week in New York to plan for further divisions of the land of Israel. They are ignorantly fighting the true God in doing so, and according to Joel, they will lose in the end.

Joel 3: 1 "For behold, in those days and at that time, when I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem, 2 I will also gather all nations, and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will enter into judgment with them there on account of My people, My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; they have also divided up My land. 3 They have cast lots for My people, have given a boy as payment for a harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they may drink. 4 "Indeed, what have you to do with Me, O Tyre and Sidon, and all the coasts of Philistia? Will you retaliate against Me? But if you retaliate against Me, swiftly and speedily I will return your retaliation upon your own head; 5 Because you have taken My silver and My gold, and have carried into your temples My prized possessions. (NKJ)

The scenes from Gaza were as ghastly as they were predictable.

Energized by Israel's retreat, thousands of Palestinians wasted little time in descending on abandoned Jewish communities, torching yeshivot and

bulldozing synagogues in a frenzy of hate and destruction.

Among those leading the charge was none other than Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas, who dismissed these places of Jewish prayer and study as "empty structures" and vowed that all such buildings would be destroyed.

Indeed, in the former Jewish community of Netzarim, Palestinian policemen chose not to intervene as rioters assaulted the synagogue, with one Palestinian officer telling a Western journalist: "The people have the right to do what they are doing." Shortly thereafter the PA even dispatched a bulldozer to help the mob complete the demolition. And so we were all treated to the bitter and painful irony of watching anti-Semitic mobs gleefully flattening synagogues as the Israeli army beat a hasty retreat.

But this is hardly the first time our government has stood by and watched as Palestinians desecrated a place held sacred by Jews. Remember Joseph's Tomb? It was just five years ago, on October 7, 2000, that the IDF withdrew from the site under cover of darkness after a joint assault launched by Palestinian police and terrorists. The PA, of course, then agreed to protect the Tomb, but that promise quickly went up in smoke. Several hours later the burial ground of the biblical Joseph had been reduced to debris.

Palestinians armed with pick-axes and hammers attacked the tomb, smashing the stone structure and ripping it apart, brick by brick. They burned Jewish prayer books and other religious articles and subsequently began transforming the site into a mosque. It was then and there, at Joseph's Tomb, just days after the start of the second intifada, that the Palestinians learned two very dangerous lessons, which continue to haunt Israel until today.

First, they saw that violence pays. Israel's retreat from Joseph's Tomb was the first time Israel had fled under fire, abandoning territory to Palestinian control under threat of the gun. Secondly, the Palestinians also learned that they could deliberately assault Jewish sites of immense historical, religious or emotional significance without fear of retribution from Israel.

After all, if they got away with an attack on Joseph's Tomb, why not take down a couple of abandoned synagogues in Gaza?

The same holds true of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, where successive Israeli governments have failed to stand up to wanton Palestinian acts of desecration.

THEREIN LIES the "original sin" of various Israeli policymakers, who have consistently capitulated, retreated and withdrawn whenever the Palestinians have trampled on some of our most important national symbols. Instead of displaying some elementary Jewish pride and

confronting the rioters to prevent them from torching what is holy to us, we prefer to shrug our collective shoulders, look away in shame, and hope for the best.



A picture of Neve Dekalim as a Jewish community with the Mediterranean Sea in the Background.



A picture of Neve Dekalim taken from the same spot only a month later, after Disengagement.

Note from Pastor Kevin: Consider the before and after pictures of the Jewish homes in Gaza (that were bulldozed by the government) to the destruction of American cities in the aftermath of unprecedented hurricanes. Also click this link for a related song: [This Land is God's land](#)

That may have made sense when the extent of our national power was limited to community councils in the shtetls of Eastern Europe, but surviving in the modern-day Middle East requires an entirely different approach. For far too long we have inculcated in the Palestinians a sense of impunity when it comes to vandalizing or defiling Jewish holy sites, and it is time for this to change forthwith. In light of the

Palestinians' behavior in Gaza this week, it should be clear to all that they cannot, must not, be entrusted with safeguarding or administering Jewish religious sites under any circumstances whatsoever.

The Palestinians have once again failed to demonstrate even the modicum of decency and civility that calls for respecting houses of worship that belong to others. And so Israel should not hesitate to do what should have been done already: take back Joseph's Tomb, reassert its sovereignty over the Temple Mount, and eject the PA-controlled Muslim Wakf from the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron. These three sites, more than any others, symbolize our ties to this Land, and the abiding faith upon which they are based. It is time for all of them to return to sole Israeli control.

Such a step would send a clear and unequivocal message to the Palestinians that there is a price to be paid for treading on Jewish religious rights and assaulting our holy sites. It would also underline Israel's determination to retain these sacred spaces in any future arrangements that might be reached.

There is a limit to what a nation can be expected to tolerate when its most hallowed places repeatedly come under attack. Israel's patience reached that limit long ago. It is time we let the Palestinians know that their abuse of our heritage, and all we hold dear, will no longer be tolerated.

Christian Friends of Israeli Communities

email: cfoic@cfoic.com

phone: 800-551-3207

web: <http://www.cfoic.com>