



# Odious Israel

There was a groundswell of support for Israel around the world last year . . . or so it seemed. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the new Iranian president, can be thanked most for provoking such reactions. He had frequently made inflammatory remarks about Israel.

By Wilfred Hahn



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Commenting on Iranian television in early December, he said: "If European countries claim that they have killed Jews in World War II... why don't they provide the Zionist regime with a piece of Europe?" He even suggested there might be room to move Israel to Canada or Alaska. Yet, he was even more explicit while still on the election circuit, saying that Israel should "be wiped off the map."

Many of the world's leaders were quick to denounce these comments. Notably, the European Union Foreign Ministry issued a formal statement on its Middle East policies, stating that Ahmadinejad's "comments are wholly unacceptable and have no place in civilized political de-



**“If European killed Jews provide the Europe?”**

bate.” That certainly sounded like support for Israel. Apparently, a warming trend for Israel also was evident in other parts of the world.

Canada recently announced that it would change its policies with respect to its UN voting practices on initiatives involving Israel. In the past, this country would always abstain from votes involving Israel, ducking any issues that might rile Canadian Muslims or Jews. Elsewhere, suggestions by Pakistan's President Mushareff that his country may some day





soon initiate formal diplomatic and trade relations with Israel were being reported. This possibility seemed incredibly constructive, as both Israel and Turkey were countries formed upon religious grounds — one on Judaism, the other on Islam. In the groundbreaking initiative of December 8, 2005, the International Red Cross finally admitted Israel as a member after 65 years.

By all accounts, things must be looking up for Israel — finally finding some sympathy and dignity in the world. Though one might not be faulted for such first impressions, appearances are actually deceiving. The fact remains that Israel has very few friends in the world, the United States remaining among its most stalwart supporters.

Sadly, the Bible says that it will come to the point when Israel will be totally alone, with even fewer friends than it has now. The trends to this outcome can be seen not only politically, but increasingly also financially and economically. We already

followed up with any diplomatic actions against Iran. So far, EU policy has amounted to little more than windy words. In the meantime, Iran is rapidly progressing in its nuclear program, estimated to be ready for operation in March 2006. Without a doubt, this approaching reality is sure to force events that may work against Israel's reception among the nations.

Other hopeful signs reviewed are also likely no more than passing wind. Pakistan's President Mushareff has since backed off his Israel-friendly talk. In various speeches late last year, he stated that any conciliatory actions with Israel are first predicated upon an independent Palestinian State. And while Canada's announcement is welcome, it remains to be seen just how it will vote at the UN in the future. After all, Canada is a highly secularized and liberal nation. It would be surprising if any of its leaders — present and future — would ever risk their political reputations for Israel. One of the biggest gaffes for any Canadian politician occurred in 1979, when then Prime Minister Joe Clark promised that Canada would move its Israel embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. He had to backpedal on this statement very quickly. For this and other reasons attributed to "inexperience," he remained Prime Minister for only a short nine months.

But isn't the Red Cross' recent admission of Israel a sure endorsement? Not really. This measure was less than dignifying as the Red Cross had to invent a new symbol, the "Red Crystal," so as to not offend the Muslims with the Red Star of David.

#### The Emergent Power of International Consensus

Bible scholars teach that Balaam's prophecies of blessing refer to today,

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—President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

can see how this can come about. The devices to do so are taking form. We will review some of these urgent developments in this month's column.

#### Words from Fair-Weathered Friends

Only a few days after its protest against Iran's anti-Israeli comments, EU officials in Brussels released another statement admonishing Israel to stop settlement activities and refrain from intervention in East Jerusalem. In fact, to date, the EU has not



GENERAL ASSEMBLY DEBATES  
EQUITABLE REPRESENTATION  
ON INCREASED SECURITY  
COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP  
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specifically Numbers 23:9: “For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations” (Numbers 23:9 KJV). Two last-day conditions are mentioned this verse: One has already occurred; the other is rapidly coming to completion.

Uniquely today we already live in a time where the “foreign god” mentioned in Daniel 11.39<sup>1</sup> is on the scene — in other words, the time that the international consensus of the nations of the world is gaining power. Through such transnational organizations as the United Nations and others (NATO, various regional groups ... etc.) all the nations of the world now have forums of policy exchange. Not only do such worldwide organizations now exist; more recently the power of “international consensus” through these organizations has begun to increase very strongly.

While the roots of today’s 191-member United Nations may go back to 1865<sup>2</sup>, it is only since 1948 that this “infrastructure” of world nations has been formally completed. However, to this point, the power of “international consensus” has been largely counterchecked by the might and influence of a few superpowers, first the then-waning British Empire, and more recently Russia and the United States. Now, only the United States remains in this league.

However, this latest superpower has begun to lose influence in setting the “international consensus” of the nations. Like Gulliver while he was sleeping<sup>3</sup>, the United States is being staked down with the ropes of hundreds of “six-inch high Lilliputians” — countless rulings, protocols and international laws being mandated and enforced by these new governing organizations of the nations. The result is that “the nations” — primarily through the United Nations and its various assemblies — are increasingly setting the policies for the entire world. And, clearly, “the nations” as a group hates Israel.

As such, Israel is already beginning to hedge its bets, anticipating that it may lose some of America’s protective influence in the future. If so, what will happen to Israel at the hands of “the nations”? Just what could then occur?

#### Soon, More Than Just Political Bias

The bias of “the nations” against Israel has already been well set. But to this point the actions of “the nations” against Israel have been largely only through means of slanted politics and exclusions. The hugely imbalanced record of actions and resolutions adopted by the UN against Israel are a clear indication. Though Israel is an advanced, democratic nation, and has been a member of the UN since 1949, it has not yet been eligible to become a member of the Security Council of the United Nations. Currently, there are five permanent members of this steering group with an additional 10 rotating members. All other nations are eligible, including such international pariahs as Libya, Sudan and others. Israel is not. Up until recently, it also was not eligible to participate in any of the UN’s Regional Groups. Clear reasons are not given, though this position is clearly unlawful in



view of the UN's own bylaws. Incredibly, Israel was even kicked out of the UN's Commission on Human Rights in 2001, being replaced by Sudan and Sierra Leone (both nations with blemished human rights records.)

All of these circumstances are well known. But to this point, thanks mostly to the United States, no harsh sanctions have yet been brought against Israel by the UN. That will likely not happen until Israel stands entirely alone.

### Means of Boycotting Israel

The technique of censoring or suppressing specific countries through economic and/or financial sanctions has a long history. Ancient Babylonian records of the second millennium BC indicate that such policies were officially organized between various kings already at that time.<sup>4</sup> In recent times, such policies have often been introduced on an international level. For example, Saddam Hussein's regime was embargoed after the first Gulf War, only allowing oil exports from Iraq through a UN-sponsored scheme facilitating food, medical and other necessary supplies. Anti-apartheid initiatives against South Africa also involved trade sanctions by various countries and organizations.

In recent years, efforts to boycott Israel, either economically or financially, have also been growing. A few are documented here, along with a potential future measure:

**The Sanctions of Pension Funds:** Pension funds today are taking a much more active "ethical" stance with respect to how they invest their stock and bond investments. Of course, the term "ethical" can be defined to mean almost anything. But without a doubt, pension can have a very significant influence upon the actions of large companies and even countries. After all, global pension fund



assets today total near \$15 trillion<sup>5</sup>, having risen to this prominence in less than four decades.

Some of these pensions — particularly those of universities and religious organizations — have begun to curtail investments in Israel. For example, in July of 2004, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) voted to divest from companies doing business with Israel. Also, campaigns to boycott Israel have been growing on campuses. According to various reports and anecdotes, over 50 campuses in the US, UK and elsewhere are petitioning their schools to divest themselves of stock in companies that have ties to Israel.

**European Sanctions?** It was only recently, on June 1, 2000 that the European Union ratified a trade agreement with Israel. However, many European movements suggest a chill in trade relations could set in ahead. According to one news source,<sup>6</sup> Israel's Foreign Ministry warns in a confidential 10-year forecast that Israel is set on a collision course with the European Union and could be marked as an outcast state (like South Africa during the apartheid years) if the Middle East conflict is not resolved. Israel's fear is that it will become vulnerable as the EU pushes to become a major global player in the next decade and the United States loses ground. This is not an inconsequential worry for Israel. Most of its trade is done with members of the EU, not the United States, as may be popularly believed.

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A more influential Europe would likely demand greater Israeli compliance with international conventions and could try to limit Israel's freedom of action in its conflict with the Palestinians. The most effective way of doing so is through financial and economic measures, as some European organizations are already recommending.

**Odious Debt:** In recent years, international economists have been discussing “odious debt” conventions. Briefly described, it is a proposed technique by which “the nations” can censure or sanction a rogue country by decreeing that its debt is “odious.” If so, this country's debt would not need to be repaid. The idea behind this technique has gained some popularity following the experience of trade sanctions with such nations as Iraq.<sup>7</sup> To illustrate, it is argued that since most of the debt that Iraq accumulated was by a regime that was not acting in the interests of its population, it should not be honored. Why? It would be considered unfair that this debt should remain a burden to the people of a future government that is both legitimate and responsible.

As intended, we can see that should a country be deemed odious, no bank or agency would be willing to lend to this nation. Their loans would likely never be repaid. Therefore, some international economists are advocating this approach for the United Nations as they feel it would be even more effective than trade sanctions, while at the same time causing less human suffering. We can anticipate that once this mechanism is in place, the definition of what is considered “odious” will be open to flexibility. It could be yet one more lever to apply against Israel at some date in the future. Most of “the nations” already view Israel as an odious little rogue state.

More than most nations, Israel stands to be very vulnerable to these and other economic sanctions.

### Buying and Selling Persecution

Restrictions on “buying and selling” are very effective, certainly so in our day and age, marked by a globalization and a highly intertwined trade and financial network between nations worldwide. As the Bible proclaims, this technique will also be used by the Antichrist with great effect: “No one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name” (Revelation 13:7).

Israel is particularly vulnerable for several reasons. First, it is a country that depends upon international trade for its livelihood. In fact, of all the higher-income nations in the world, it is most exposed to imports and exports of goods and services. It has one of the highest trade intensities (to use an economist's term), meaning a high level of exports and imports relative to the size of its economy. This exposure to trade with the nations of the world has risen steadily over the years, more than tripling since 1960.

Another factor that contributes to Israel's vulnerability is that it has little in the way of natural resources and energy supplies. Therefore, it must buy these from the rest of the world. Also significant, it is forced to transact much of its trade with more distant nations. Many Muslim nations, some of these sharing borders with Israel, will not trade with it. As such, trade activity on average involves longer distances.

Though Israel today has the 41st highest economic output per person of all nations,<sup>8</sup> it remains a very small economy. In fact, Israel's economy still represents less than one-third percent (0.29 percent) of world economic output in 2004. That's a level not much higher than in the early 1960s, when its size was only 0.25 percent. A country of this size, especially given its geography with few easily accessible seaports, could be easily boycotted with little impact or inconvenience upon the rest of the world. While there may be some “high tech” and



military products exported by Israel that may be difficult to substitute, virtually all of Israel's remaining exports (mostly diamonds and agricultural goods) are not strategically essential for the rest of the world.

### Thoughts to Ponder

Returning to Balaam's prophecy, we yet want to comment on the second condition found in that verse (Numbers 23:9) that would apply to Israel in the endtimes — that it would be entirely alone in the world. That has not happened yet.

The United States has been Israel's strongest supporter in the world, though its record has not been unblemished in this regard. But the fact remains: Had America not been in this role, our Lord would have had to play His hand in delivering Israel. Indeed, this will yet happen in the future — when Israel is, in fact, left all alone and all the nations of the world come against it.

One doesn't need to be familiar with Bible prophecy to imagine that not even the United States will be standing with Israel in the end. As mentioned, unbelieving Israel is already worried about this possibility. Not only is it anticipating Europe's increasing role in establishing world affairs and Islamic relationships, but also America's anticipated shared role — as opposed to its continuing "superpower" status. Its analysts are already sensing change. Quoting from a recent policy report, "the European Union [...] is quite sure become more active in world affairs [...] even more involved in the Middle East. Furthermore, U.S.-EU cooperation is sure to improve because of shared interests [...] with respect to the Middle East."<sup>9</sup>

Of course, we can only speculate as to how it will come about that Israel will be finally left alone some day. However, as we live in the Age of Global Capital, it would not be unreasonable to imagine that not only religious extremism (Christian and Islamic) will ultimately play a role, but also issues involving greed and money.

After all, the essence of America and high-income nations such as Canada and others is "business" and the quest for "prosperity." Numerous possibilities exist why supporting Israel will some day be-



come bad for "business" and "prosperity." Notoriously, most major investors don't allow morality and religion to stand in the way of profits in any case. For example, it is interesting to observe that despite an ongoing "war on terror," it is Islamic stock exchanges that have soared these past few years ... much more so than Israel's stock market and others around the globe.

As mentioned, the size of Israel's economy is puny. On the other hand, the total economic size of Islamic nations (the 57 member nations of the Organization of Islamic Conference) is 23.5 times as large.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, as the world becomes ever more dependent upon imported energy, it would only be reasonable to expect that

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oil-exporting nations will become much more influential in world affairs. They already are. As it happens, at last count, 74.8 percent of world oil reserves are found in countries that are either Islamic republics or members of the 57-country member Organization of the Islamic Conference.<sup>11</sup> Of this Islamic group, Arab countries account for over 75 percent of oil reserves. Islamic nations have oil and hate Israel. America is the world's largest importer and per-capita user of energy and still stands in the breach for Israel. How much longer? We can only speculate. However, we can be sure that the cause of energy supply is a very strong candidate. Much more so recently. In an unprecedented change of forecast, the US Energy Information Administration boosted its forecast for average oil prices between now and 2025 by 63 percent from its previous forecast of only a year ago.<sup>12</sup> That forecast is a complete about-turn, signaling that energy has become a very urgent policy issue.

#### Will it be odious Israel or oil?

If it came to that question, no doubt, the world would choose oil and cut Israel loose as a repulsive, unsupportable nation, choosing instead to appease the Muslim oil-exporting nations. At that point, Israel will likely be subjected to heavy economic and financial sanctions.

We must be careful in our speculations. We cannot be sure about the exact reasons Israel will eventually find itself alone, as Balaam's prophecy clearly predicts. What we can be sure of is what the Bible says. This "odious" state of affairs will be completely reversed some day. "For the LORD thy God blesseth thee, as He promised thee: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, but thou shalt not borrow; and thou shalt reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over thee" (Deuteronomy 15:6, KJV).

No matter the world's possible financial or economic sanctions against Israel, "the LORD will ransom Jacob and redeem them from the hand of those stronger than they. They will come and shout for joy on the heights of Zion; they will rejoice in the bounty of the LORD — the grain, the new wine and the oil" (Jeremiah 31:11-12). (MC)

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#### ENDNOTES

- 1 "He will attack the mightiest fortresses with the help of a foreign god" (Daniel 11:39).
- 2 The formation of the International Telecommunications Union in 1965 is widely regarded as the earliest root of today's United Nations.
- 3 Jonathon Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, 1726.
- 4 H.W. F. Saggs, *Peoples of the Past: Babylonians*. 2000; University of California Press, Berkeley, CA. pg. 122.
- 5 Watson Wyatt. 2004 global estimate comprising 11 major pension fund markets.
- 6 "Israel Fears Europe Will Make It an Outcast Like South Africa," *NewsMax Wires*, Wednesday, October, 13, 2004.
- 7 Seema Jayachandran and Michael Kremer. "Odious Debt," *American Economic Review*, April 2005.
- 8 World Bank World Development Indicators, 2004. Israel's economic output per person was estimated to be US\$20,800.
- 9 Yehezkel Dror. "Foundations of an Israeli Grand Strategy Toward the European Union," *Jewish Political Studies Review*, Fall 2004.
- 10 Estimated from World Bank, World Development Indicators, for the years 2002-2004.
- 11 Calculated from the *BP Statistical Review*, 2004. Other surveys yield slightly different results. Based on the World Oil survey of 2004, this figure is calculated at 75.3 percent and the *Oil & Gas Journal Survey*, January 1, 2005 at 66.3 percent. Gas estimates based on these surveys find closer agreement, placing between 54.7 percent to 55.5 percent of world reserves in the Organization of Islamic Conference countries.
- 12 Energy Information Administration, *Annual Energy Outlook 2006 Overview*, released December 2005.