

Piercing the Smokescreen

A Treatise on Deception

Part I of this series was entitled “A Christian Response to Islam”. “Piercing the Smokescreen” is Part II.

Many years ago we Sisters attended a prayer vigil outside a cinema that was showing a blasphemous film. A newspaper reporter asked one of my Sisters why she thought it was a blasphemous film. She replied that she had read about it. The reporter then asked: “Do you believe everything you read?” That one sentence spoke volumes! Especially since it came from a journalist.

At that time we probably did believe everything we read, or nearly everything. However, things are different today. Today’s world is filled with misinformation and deliberate deceptions.

I still remember a news item that we saw on SBS some years ago. An elderly woman was sitting on a wheelchair in the midst of rubble and was encircled by armed Israeli soldiers. A BBC reporter was also there. She kept asking the Israeli soldiers why they weren’t helping the woman. Couldn’t they see that she needed help? The soldiers did not answer. The take-away message was: The Israeli soldiers are callous; they don’t even aid a helpless old woman. Perhaps that’s what most viewers were thinking.

When I watched it, I thought, there’s something wrong here. If you have ever pushed a wheelchair, you know it’s ok on smooth surfaces like concrete, wood or vinyl, but it’s harder on carpets and even harder on grass. That woman was in a vacant lot on uneven ground with a lot of pebbles, stones and other rubble. How did she get there? She couldn’t have navigated such terrain by herself. So, who put her there? Why was she left there? The next day we heard that she was a suicide bomber; the wheelchair was booby-trapped. If the Israeli soldiers had approached her, they would have been blown up.

What about the coverage of the Lebanon war in 2006? Do you remember how often we were shown pictures of buildings that the Israelis had bombed? And there in the middle of the dust and rubble would be a child’s stuffed toy. The unspoken message was: “A child was in that building. Is it still alive?” Yet, the stuffed toy looked brand-new and had no dust or soot on it. How come it survived the bombing so well? You guessed it. It was placed there afterwards for the photographers. At the end of this war there were a number of media apologies for the photos and reports they had printed.

How do we watch the news? We need to be alert. We need to use our God-given intellect. Above all, we need to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to give us discernment.

Today's talk will only cover a small selection, but I hope it will give you an idea of what is going on and how important it is for us to be alert. The main emphasis of this talk is deception and the need to ask the Lord for discernment – no matter what the topic is. However, I have focussed mainly on the Middle East, since it is important to understand the situation there.

First, I'd like to mention the question of Halal. What is Halal? "Halal" means "permissible". To be more specific: "permissible for a Muslim to consume". The Jewish people also designate certain foods that are permissible for them to eat. Such foods are called "kosher" or "kashrut". If we don't object to the Jews having kosher foods, why should we have a problem with the Muslims having halal foods? After all, they should have a right to know what their religion permits them to eat.

Well, let's look a little closer... For any food to be considered halal, it must comply with the Islamic ritual and observance of Sharia law. Forbidden items include meat and other products of any animal that has not been slaughtered in the prescribed manner in the name of Allah. Of course, animals must be slaughtered before we can eat their meat. However, the Islamic slaughtering practice requires slitting the throat of the animal while it is still alive and letting it bleed to death. While this is going on, a Muslim recites a prayer dedicating the slaughter to Allah.

Secondly, Muslims have come up with a very clever way of generating income through halal. They host marketing seminars for representatives from the food industry and hospitality industry with the promise to increase their markets if they purchase halal certification for their products. The certification is only valid for one year, so any interested corporations would need to pay an annual fee. The cost is, of course, passed on to the consumer. Islamic organizations estimated the value of the global halal certification market at USD 2.3 trillion dollars in 2013, growing by 20% per year. No other religious group has imposed a similar tax-like scheme on the general public. Of further concern is the fact that Halal Certification funds mosques, madrasses and jihad.

In other words, halal certification on the outside looks like a minor accommodation that we can make towards the Muslim population of our

country. But when we take a closer look, it means that if we support halal certification either in principle or financially, we are actually supporting the spread of Islam.

Let's switch topics. In 1997 Indonesia went through a severe financial crisis. The International Monetary Fund imposed conditions on Indonesia. I remember listening to the list of conditions as I was driving home from Sydney one day. I was shocked. Even though I only knew a little about Indonesia, I knew that Soeharto could never fulfil those conditions, and I remember wondering whether the IMF was trying to topple Soeharto. Sometimes the Lord lets us experience such "checks" in the spirit to prompt us to pray. Years later I came across an article about this situation. An American economist, Steve Hanke, stated that Bill Clinton and the IMF deliberately worsened the Indonesian crisis to force Soeharto to resign. [pause] There were also staged student protests to topple Soeharto. Why do I say "staged"? We had a friend who worked at a Christian university in Bandung, about 3 hours away from Jakarta. She told us they received a letter informing them that they were required to send 4 busses of students to the demonstrations, the supposedly "spontaneous" demonstrations.

We heard something similar from a journalist in Israel. He's an American and is a friend of ours. He said he often gets phone calls informing him that at such and such a time and at such and such a location there will be an "incident"; it would be good for reporters to be there.

The question is: If such incidents are not spontaneous, who has organized them? And why?

There is a phenomenon in Islam called "taqiyya"

Taqiyya means "deception". Although the Quran commends truth (sura 33:24) and condemns lies (sura 40:28), it also permits and even encourages Muslims to lie and use deception.

"Taqiyya in the defence of Islam allows Muslims to make contradictory statements depending upon whom they are addressing. When Arab leaders address Western media, they often say one thing (for instance, they would condemn a suicide attack), but when addressing their own people, they say something quite different (for instance, they would praise the suicide bombers and glorify them as "martyrs").

In line with taqiyya the Palestinians are rewriting history. I'd like to mention an example of their re-writing of history which should be obvious to all Christians and Jews. Muslims have claimed that the Temple Mount in Jerusalem (where now the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque are located) was never a Jewish holy site. But from our Bible we know that Solomon built the Temple there, that Jews worshipped there for centuries, that it was destroyed by the Babylonians and rebuilt by King Herod. Jesus and His disciples went to the Temple. Jesus taught in the Temple precincts. Jesus predicted that the Temple would be destroyed, and indeed it was destroyed by Roman forces in AD 70. There are many references to the Temple in our Scriptures. Yet, the Muslims claim it was never a Jewish holy site! **Unfortunately, if a statement is repeated often enough, people come to believe it.**

When this was going through the press in 2001 (actually Arab leaders reiterated it strongly last year too), our Jewish friends asked us why the Christians are silent. They said: Christians should know it was a Jewish holy site; it's in their Bible. Why don't they say anything? Are they going to be silent as they were during the Holocaust? Will we be left alone again? With the rise of anti-Semitism many Jews today are frightened, very frightened.

Understanding the concept of "taqiyya" is very important in understanding the PR war. The Arab side exaggerates and prevaricates as an integral part of its strategy against the Jewish state.

Taqiyya is not something that Westerners invented in order to demonize Islam. It is one of their tactics. In fact, the Quran says that Allah is the best of deceivers. (sura 3:54 & 8:30)

Here are some examples from the first two decades of this millennium.

First, an example from Australia: Muslims planned a conference to be held in Melbourne in March last year. Did you hear of it? It was to be the largest ever Islamic conference in the history of Australia. It was advertised as a **Peace Conference**, but it was meant to be a conference for Islamic propagation. At a planning meeting Waseem Razi told his Muslim audience of the true intention, and I quote: "We don't accept every religion. We are there to convey the message that Islam is the only right religion." Even radical speakers had been invited.

Do you remember **the Jenin “massacre”** in April 2002? The Israeli Defense Forces had attacked the Jenin refugee camp in the West Bank, since it served as a launch for numerous attacks against Israeli civilians. Palestinians claimed that 400-500 people or even thousands had been killed. The media decried the massacre for weeks, and it sparked an international outrage. Subsequent investigations by the United Nations found that 23 Israeli soldiers had died and 46-55 Palestinians, most of whom were gunmen who had booby-trapped the area to inflict Israeli casualties. There had been no massacre. Yes, the truth came out! But it scarcely received a mention in the news, and had we not been listening carefully, we would have missed the 2 sentences. Did you hear it?

The 2006 Lebanon war began when Hezbollah kidnapped two Israeli soldiers on the border. Again, casualty figures were inflated. For example, Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora said that Israel had deliberately massacred 40 people in the village of Hula. This was duly reported by the media. He later admitted that there had been only one death. / Do you remember the disabled orphans in the basement of a high rise building? That was very sad. The building had been targeted during the night, but it did not collapse till 8 hours later. Why weren't the children evacuated in those 8 hours? Hezbollah said it was impossible. All the streets were torn up. On the other hand, they notified the press in Beirut and asked them to come out and cover the scene. How come the press could get through if all the roads were damaged?

One of the most serious Arab fabrications is **the “martyrdom” of Mohammed al-Dura**. Al-Dura was a 12-year-old Palestinian boy who was supposedly shot by Israeli soldiers while his father Jamal tried to shield him. His name became a byword for Zionist brutality. [pause] Actually, it was impossible for the Israelis to have shot him from their location. To determine whether Israeli bullets had killed the boy Israel asked for permission to do an autopsy. Permission was refused.

It was a French TV station (channel 2) that filmed the report. However, there was no blood in that film - neither on the boy's body nor on the father's, whereas the two were supposed to have received 15 bullets altogether.

The boy shown at the funeral as Mohammed al-Dura arrived at the hospital before 10 am, whereas the French news report was filmed after 2:30 pm.

In short, not only did Israel not kill Mohammed al-Dura, he was not killed at all. Seven years later it was revealed that in the raw footage shot by the French TV station the boy is seen to be moving after he was pronounced dead. (I saw the footage. Yes, the boy actually moved after he was declared dead.) Not only was the death of the 12-year-old boy a fabrication, but at the same location many other “fabrications” were filmed that day. There are three hours of raw footage from Reuters and AP taken on the same day and in the vicinity of the Netzarim Junction, where Mohammed Al Dura was supposedly killed. Yet this footage was televised internationally.

The fabrication of Al-Dura’s death had at least one very tragic consequence. Twelve days later two Israeli reservists strayed into Ramallah by mistake. They were taken to a police station, and when local residents heard they were there, a mob stormed the police station shouting the name of Al-Dura. They killed the two IDF reservists to avenge Al-Dura’s death, and they mutilated the bodies.

Incidentally, it was an Italian journalist who broke the story. He filmed it, and it was televised internationally. Later a representative of Italian Television had to apologize to the PA for screening the film, and the apology was published in the PA’s Al Hayat al-Jadida newspaper. The journalist had his press card suspended. Why would Italy need to apologize? In Bat Ye’or’s book titled “Eurabia” I read that the organization “Euro Arab Dialogue” had called on the member states (the European Union) to give favourable media coverage to the Arabs, to improve public opinion regarding the Arab world and to join the Arab side politically against Israel. pp. 53, 65-66

Iraq and Weapons of Mass Destruction: What is the truth? A Syrian dissident said that the WMD were moved to Syria and were stored in 3 different locations. One of them was the Beka’a Valley. His articles was printed in one or two different newspapers in the West. Canon Andrew White from the Coventry Cathedral in England often visited Iraq prior to the war. He became friendly with the regime, and they trusted him. During his last trip before the war he visited some Iraqi families and they told him about many incidents of friends and relatives having been injured or killed by moving WMD. Thirdly, an Iraqi Air Force General, Georges Sada, who was commissioned to move the WMD said the same. After his defection to the West, he wrote a comprehensive book entitled, “Saddam’s Secrets”. These men not only spoke about the WMD, but

their experiences were in print. Why were they ignored? Why did the media not publicize them? It was like a deliberate silence. Who imposed the media blackout? Why?

On 10th July it was reported that nearly 40 kilos of nuclear material, hopefully low-grade, were found in the University of Mosul in Iraq. Also a former chemical weapons facility was nearby. How could that be if Iraq didn't have any Weapons of Mass Destruction?

On 21st August last year there was a chemical attack in Syria. There was much speculation as to what actually happened and who did it. America was considering a punitive strike against the Assad government in Syria. Such an action could have set off a chain of events, involving multiple nations. In the meantime a rebel group in Ghout admitted that they were the ones responsible for the attack and they also stated that the chemical weapons had come from Saudi Arabia. America was blaming the Assad government for the chemical attack. But why? The neighbourhood that was struck by the chemical weapons was one that was loyal to Assad. He would have had no reason to attack his supporters.

To mention another concern about dangerous weapons: As you know, most of the world has been concerned about Iran's nuclear ambitions. The former president Ahmadinejad was very vocal about his military nuclear plans and his intention to wipe out Israel and attack the United States. Therefore, many rejoiced that the new president, Hassan Rouhani, was said to be a moderate. However, what most did not know was that he was Iran's chief nuclear negotiator on behalf of the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei. On a YouTube video he explained that he was able to advance Iran's nuclear program through the use of deception and the pitting of Europe against America. Did you listen carefully? For years the international community debated whether they could believe Iran or not. Now the new president admits that he had deceived the world about Iran's nuclear program.

Some weeks ago we heard that the United States and Britain were seriously considering asking Iran to help solve the problem in Iraq! Can you imagine that?!

Now let's look at the Palestinian problem. We need to go back in history to understand the background. What is Palestine? And who are the Palestinians?

Was Palestine a state or a nation? No never. Then what was Palestine?

Since this is a complicated topic, I thought I would show you a VCD. It's called "History in a Nutshell". This will help us better understand the ethnic, geographical and political perspectives.

(You can find it at this location on the internet)

http://www.conceptwizard.com/info-files/conen/conflict_2.html

[Stop at the page with the British Mandate.]

The British referred to this area as Palestine. According to most sources, Palestine is an English name derived from the Roman name Palaestina. When the Romans captured Judea in the first century, they called it Syria Palaestina... some believe to erase any Jewish connection to the land and to insult the Jews by using a name derived from the Philistines, Israel's ancient enemies in the time of King Saul and King David.

Who are the Palestinians? Are they descendants of the Philistines? No, the Philistines are now extinct. Furthermore, the Philistines came from the Mediterranean area near Greece. Today's Palestinians are Arabs.

From 1917-1948 **ALL** people living in the area were called "Palestinians". They were NOT a separate race. **Anyone** living in the area at that time (whether Jew, Arab or from another ethnic group) was called Palestinian. Countless official documents from the time of the British Mandate speak of the Jews and the Arabs of Palestine - not Jews and Palestinians. Actually, the Jews used the name Palestine in a number of their names. For instance, the Jerusalem Post was called The Palestine Post from 1932 to 1948. Or: today's Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, founded in 1936, was called the Palestine Symphony Orchestra, composed of some 70 Palestinian Jews.

Actually, Jews were the indigenous people of Palestine. We know that the Jews have lived in the area now known as Israel since the time of Abraham (with the exception of 400 years in Egypt between Joseph and Moses). When the Romans dispersed the Jews in the year 135 AD, "Jews did not entirely disappear from

the Holy Land. Official records listed forty-three Jewish communities in the sixth century (twelve along the coast, in the Negev Desert and east of the Jordan River; and thirty-one in Galilee and Jordan Valley)” (p.27 “The Mountains of Israel”) The Jews are also the indigenous people of what is now called the West Bank. Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Bethany, Hebron, Jericho, Ai, Bethel, Shiloh and Shechem are located there. Do you recognize these names? Historically, the “West Bank” has been part of Israel since the earliest of days, and the Bible is proof.

Until the 1960s most Arabs in Palestine preferred to identify themselves as part of the great Arab nation or citizens of “southern Syria”.

[Return to Nutshell and stop at the result of the 1967 war.]

Yes, Israel won the Six-Day War, but then there was a new twist to the situation. Something else happened that year.

It was in 1967 that Arafat coined the term “Palestinian” as a noun. His intention was to brand Jews as intruders on someone else’s turf. Did you catch that? The term “Palestinian” as a noun was coined by Yasser Arafat in 1967 to brand Jews as intruders on someone else’s turf. He presented Arab residents of Israel and the Territories as indigenous inhabitants since time immemorial. This fabrication of peoplehood allowed Palestinian Arabs to gain parity with the Jewish people as a nation deserving of an independent state.

Later, Zahir Muhsein, a member of the PLO executive committee admitted: and I quote: “Only for political and tactical reasons do we speak today about the existence of a Palestinian people, since Arab national interests demand that we posit the existence of a distinct Palestinian people to oppose Zionism.”

[Return to Nutshell till end]

The peace talks concern the status of Jerusalem and the 2 disputed territories, which are the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Over the past two decades there has been a lot of talk about a roadmap. But is it a **road map to peace or a road map to annihilation?**

Do you remember the slogan “land for peace”? For years the international community was telling Israel to give up land for peace. Surely, if the

Palestinians had land, there would be peace. In 2005 the Israelis moved out of Gaza; they evacuated the Jews and dismantled settlements. They were hoping for peace. Instead, they found they had a terror state on their doorstep. Hamas bombards Israel with missiles. Where is the promised peace? Did any of the nations who were urging Israel to give up land for peace apologize when they saw it didn't work out? I didn't hear of it. Did you?

Victor Mordecai made the point: If you lived in Europe in the 1930s and wanted to know what Adolph Hitler was planning to do, you just needed to read "Mein Kampf". Accordingly, if you want to know what the Arab leaders are planning to do, you should read their newspapers in Arabic and listen to their speeches on Arabic TV.

It's especially important to know what they have stated in their charters.

Hamas was founded by the Muslim Brotherhood, a radical Egyptian organization.

Just one example from its **charter**, which was written in 1988 (on 18th August 1988):

Article Eleven states:

The Islamic Resistance Movement believes that the land of Palestine is an Islamic Waqf consecrated for future Muslim generations until Judgement Day. (waqf = an Islamic endowment of property to be held in trust and used for a charitable or religious purpose)

There is no solution for the Palestinian question except through Jihad. Initiatives, proposals and international conferences are all a waste of time and vain endeavors. The Palestinian people know better than to consent to having their future, rights and fate toyed with.

Let's take a look at the PLO

The Palestinian **Liberation** Organization was founded in 1964 by the Arab League. At that time Jordan controlled the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and Egypt controlled the Gaza Strip. There were no occupied territories. There were no illegal settlements. So what were they liberating? Their charter called for the destruction of the Zionist state (that's Israel) and for the establishment of a

“Palestinian entity”. Despite having the word “Liberation” in their name, nothing and nobody was being liberated. The only real goal was to destroy Israel, then and now.

The bottom line is that the Palestine National Covenant calls for the destruction of the State of Israel. And yet the PLO attended the peace talks in Oslo. How was that possible? Understandably, Israel would only consider the PLO as a peace partner at the Oslo Accords if the PLO revised its charter. So in 1993 Arafat signed an agreement to do so. But he **did not** and to this date the changes have not been made. (Arafat was reminded in 1994 and 1995. In 1996 it was said that the PLO had voted to make the changes. The governments of the United States and Israel welcomed the news. However, they did not change their charter. They merely declared their intention to look into it and they set up a committee to study the matter.)

In the West Bank the PLO has morphed into Fatah. So we have Hamas controlling the Gaza Strip and Fatah controlling the West Bank. At the moment there is a unity government, but that might change.

At Camp David in the year 2000 (when the Gaza Strip and the West Bank were both under the Palestinian Authority) the Prime Minister of Israel, Ehud Barak, offered the Palestinians:

- 95% of the West Bank
- 100% of the Gaza Strip
- Palestinian control over parts of Jerusalem including most of the Old City
- “Religious Sovereignty” over the Temple Mount (rather than Israeli sovereignty, which had been in effect since 1967)

Arafat rejected the offer. President Clinton and others who participated put the blame for the failure of the talks squarely on Arafat.

Four years earlier a PLO spokesman had spelled it out clearly: “The struggle with the Zionist enemy is not a struggle about Israel’s borders, but about Israel’s **existence**.” Bassam Abu Sharif, a top Arafat aide and PLO spokesman, quoted by Kuwait News Agency, May 31, 1986. P.86

This is the crux of the matter. Ehud Barak offered the Palestinians 97% of the land they claimed they were fighting for, and Arafat refused. The

condition would have been to recognize Israel, and that is something that Arafat would not do. The Palestinians do not want just part of Israel. They want all of Israel.

The United States tries time and again to restart the peace talks. But why? The Palestinians want to wipe out Israel and have said so. An article from 7th August 2013 said the peace talks are just a ruse. I am quoting from an Internet article: “The Palestinian Authority of Religious Affairs, Mahmoud Al-Habbash, reassured everyone last week that the political peace process is just a ruse, and part of a larger scheme to defeat their enemy.” He then likened the current peace talks to the treaty that Muhammad made with the Quraish tribe of Mecca; two years after Muhammad signed the treaty he had gained enough strength and so he launched the brutal conquest of Mecca.

So why more peace talks? What is the agenda? Is it a smokescreen? If so, what is behind it?

This brings us up to the present date. Let us look at the situation in Gaza and Israel. At the beginning of July Gaza was bombarding southern Israel with hundreds of rockets. The government of Israel had the responsibility to protect its people. The rockets were not precision rockets, so they could strike anywhere, including residential areas. No one knew what casualties could result. How could the IDF protect Israel? How could they get rid of the ammunition depots in Gaza when many of them were stored in and under homes, or even in mosques and when Hamas located its military headquarters beneath a hospital? Israel did not want to cause civilian casualties. For years now the Israeli Defense Force has routinely notified the residents of every planned airstrike in advance – by leaflets, phone calls and SMS. Instead of evacuating, Hamas called in human shields. Yes, the IDF has [routinely warned innocent civilians](#) ahead of an airstrike so that they are unharmed, whereas Hamas [openly boasts](#) about the "success" of its strategy of using civilians as human shields. Hamas reasons, either the human shields would protect them, because Israel does not want to kill civilians, or if the attack went ahead and the human shields were killed, Hamas could accuse Israel of killing civilians. What a dilemma!

However, the Palestinian Representative to the United Nations Human Rights Council unequivocally stated on 9th July that “each and every” Palestinian

missile now being launched against Israeli civilian centers constitutes “a crime against humanity”, and that by contrast, Israel’s own response actions in Gaza “followed legal procedures”, because as Hamas spokespersons admitted on TV, “the Israelis warned them to evacuate their homes before the bombardment. In such a case, continued the Palestinian UN representative, if someone is killed, the law considers it a mistake rather than an intentional killing because they followed the legal procedures. However, “as for the missiles launched from our side, we never warn anyone about where these missiles are about to fall or about the operations we carry out.”

Netanyahu, Israel’s Prime Minister, stated: “The difference between us is simple. We develop defensive systems against missiles in order to protect our civilians, and they use their civilians to protect their missiles and this is the entire difference: They fire indiscriminately at our civilians and our cities in order to attack them. Sometimes they hit soldiers by mistake. We strike at their armed forces and sometimes we hit civilians by mistake.

Canada, the U.K. and the U.S. have clearly stated that Hamas is the aggressor in this conflict, and that Israel’s response is justified.

Earlier I mentioned the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in 2005. A group of American Jewish donors paid \$14 million for 3,000 greenhouses left behind by expelled Jewish settlers and donated them to the Palestinian Authority. Although the Israelis encouraged Gaza’s development, the green houses were soon looted and destroyed. Hamas engaged in a coup-d’état murdering many members of the Palestinian Authority, seizing control of all of Gaza, and turning it into a militant theocracy. They used the material left behind by the Israelis not to feed their citizens but to build rockets with which to attack Israeli civilians. They taught their children to hate, to kill and to want to die as martyrs. This is a tragedy.

Since the start of Operation Protective Edge on Tuesday, Israel has allowed approximately 200 trucks per day to enter the Gaza Strip through the commercial Kerem Shalom border crossing. The trucks carry food products, medical supplies and fuel for cars and the local power plant, While Hamas and their allied terrorists continue to launch rockets and missiles at Israeli civilians, shipments to their civilian families are continuing unabated. Israel does its best

not to punish Gaza civilians for the attacks perpetrated by the terrorists in their midst.

Moreover, many people from Gaza continue to receive medical treatment in Israel. Over 20 Palestinians, including eight children from Gaza, are being treated at the Rambam hospital in Haifa. Israel often treats patients from Gaza and neighbouring countries. The doctors do not let politics interfere with their medical work; they want to save lives.

Why did Hamas start the hostilities? If we examine the events in the Middle East over the past fifty years or so, we see that there are many factions in the Muslim countries and there are often disputes. One way to unify the factions was to attack Israel. Their animosity towards Israel united them. This is now changing. Egypt stands on Israel's side and would even be happy if Israel wiped out Hamas. Hamas is almost isolated in the international community. It is listed as a terrorist organization, and indeed it is. Therefore, it does not qualify for U.S. aid. It is bankrupt and cannot pay thousands of people on its payroll. Hamas owes money to Israel. This came out when it was reported that a missile from Gaza hit the Israel Electric Company. The article noted that Gaza already owed the Electricity Company \$525 million. Some say that Hamas attacked Israel in order to generate sympathy and support from other countries. This time it didn't work. In fact, a poll taken in Gaza showed that a majority of Gazans did not want this war and a majority did not want Hamas to rule over them. Also, many of them would prefer to work in Israel.

Aside from the barrage of missiles Hamas has another strategy. It is called Boycott, Divest and Sanctions against Israel (BDS for short). It is a movement initiated by the Palestinians, and has gathered momentum in the West. Even churches have bought into it. The goal is the economic collapse of Israel. Why has the West fallen for this? It doesn't make sense. Quite aside from hurting Israel, we are also hurting ourselves. Just look at the contributions that Israel has made to medicine and technology – for instance, pacemakers, defibrillators, vaccines for polio and cholera, laser technology, USB drives, Google, computer chips, mobile phones to name a few. Many people's lives have been saved through the medical research that Israel has done.

Wherever disaster strikes in the world – be it natural or man-made – Israel is always among the first to send **medical and search-and-rescue teams and supplies**, even when it lacks diplomatic relations with the country in crisis.

Israel has brought so many benefits to the world. Trying to destroy Israel doesn't make sense.

Let's look at another trouble spot for a moment – Iraq. ISIS, an offshoot of Al Qaeda, has wreaked havoc during its brutal invasion of northern Iraq. Chuck Hagel, the American Secretary of Defence has warned America: “Make no mistake – and this country should not make any mistake on this, nor anyone in Congress – this is a threat to our country. This is a force that is sophisticated, it's dynamic, it's strong, it's organized, it's well-financed, it's competent.” In my last talk I mentioned that the goal of Islam is not peaceful co-existence, but world domination. ISIS takes the Quran seriously. They have not only set up a Caliphate in Iraq, but have asked for Muslims worldwide to give their allegiance to the Caliphate. They have a strong presence in Syria and have started to infiltrate Lebanon, Gaza and Egypt. They are taking their religion seriously. In Islam religion and politics are one.

How seriously do we Christians take our religion? How seriously do we take the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount? Do we pray for our enemies? Do we bless them? Sometimes we might even find it hard to have a Christ-like attitude to someone in our own family or to a colleague at work. Do we repent? Do we ask forgiveness and seek reconciliation? Living a Christian life entails full commitment. We are called to be light for the world, no matter how dark it is and no matter what it might cost us.

At the beginning of this talk I said: We need to be alert. Above all, we need to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to give us discernment.

Yes, we are living in a time of deception. A smokescreen can veil the real scenario from our eyes. If we are not walking close to Jesus and following His commandments, we will not be able to see through the smokescreen. In John 10 Jesus says that He is the Good Shepherd and He adds: “My sheep listen to My voice. I know them, and they follow Me.” Among all the voices in the world clamouring for our attention, can we discern Jesus' voice? Are we listening for His voice? Can we hear His heartbeat? Can we sense what grieves Him and what would bring Him joy? Jesus tells us in John 14: “Whoever has My

commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves Me. He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I too will love him and show Myself to him.” Love is sensitive to the one it loves. Are we sensitive to Jesus’ heart?

We also need to be sensitive to God’s heart to know **His agenda**. In Matthew 16:21 when Jesus told His disciples of the suffering that would await Him in Jerusalem, Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to You!” Thereupon Jesus replied: “Get behind me, Satan. You are a stumbling block to Me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.” Very strong words. Jesus knew He had to be crucified. It was part of God’s eternal plan for our salvation. Peter’s eyes were veiled. He could not see God’s agenda.

Last year we heard an Egyptian doctor sharing about her country. She lives in Cairo.. As we all know, in 2011 hundreds of thousands of Egyptians from all walks of life and all religions gathered in Tahrir Square to demand freedom and liberty and democracy. The world called it the Arab Spring. Later, their agenda was hijacked by the extremists, and life became even more difficult for the Egyptians. Christians continued to pray. After one year Morsy was removed from power, and the Muslim Brotherhood was discredited; the Brotherhood had shown its true face. Christians had been persecuted by the Brotherhood .Now Muslims are starting to speak positively about Christians. Even the media has spoken positively about Christian initiatives. Millions of Muslims are coming to know Jesus – through satellite broadcasts and telecasts and through dreams and visions. There are amazing testimonies. Yes, God uses suffering and hardships. His plans are beyond our understanding. Here we see God had His own agenda.

Lastly, I want to mention the spiritual dimension to the conflicts in our world. God has told us in His Word that we are not battling against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers. Considering the recent developments in Iraq, we need to take our calling to prayer seriously. It is a very special privilege on the one hand, but also a very serious responsibility on the other hand.

Let’s go back in time to England.

History books and national archives tell us about the events of World War II. But they usually don’t mention the war that was being fought in the heavenlies, as countless numbers of Christians prayed for the defeat of the forces of evil. Some of these events are documented in a book about Rees Howells called “The Intercessor”. Awesome victories won by prayer. Men and women all over the

country, and especially at Rees Howells' Bible school, spent hours in prayer every day. Just one example of the awesome answers to prayer: The German Air Force was attacking England. They had already bombed much of the country. Now it seemed like an endless stream of planes was coming. Churchill watched the enemy squadrons pouring in. He knew they were far superior to England's air force and that they could easily win. He asked the military commanders: What reserves do we have? They replied: None, sir. Then suddenly the enemy planes turned around and left. There seemed to be no reason why the German Air Force should have turned for home, just at the moment when victory was within their grasp. England was saved by prayer.

Later we heard that one of the German pilots had been interviewed. He shared that when they were approaching England that day, they were overwhelmed by the number of fighter planes they saw coming at them. They were very surprised, because they thought England did not have so many planes. They knew they could not win against so many, so they turned home. *The planes they saw were not there!*

What an amazing testimony of the power of prayer! Let us stay close to the heart of God and ask Him for His directives.

Let us pray:

Our Father in heaven,

As we come into Your presence, we can sense how Your heart must break when you look down on this world and see so much anguish, suffering and war - not just in one place, but all over the globe, and now particularly in Your Land.

Lord, we know the things that make for peace, and yet we as Your children so seldom live them out. Give us a spirit of repentance over all the things that grieve You - over our self-centeredness, our anger, bitterness, resentment, trying to settle disputes our way and not Yours. We humble ourselves that men often cannot see You in our lives. Lord, let us live out Your message of peace and reconciliation first, as we seek to pray for the peace of our world.

Lord, we lift up to You the strife-torn areas of this world - the Middle East, Africa and many Asian countries - and we pray that You will intervene as the

Saviour, who came to this world as the Prince of Peace. Bring Your peace into the hearts and homes of those who are suffering.

We pray for those who have suffered in terrorist attacks, for those who are maimed, for those who have lost loved ones - we ask that You would comfort them and heal the wounds in their hearts and their bodies.

We remember all those who are in danger of piracy, kidnapping, violence and jihad. Be with those who are living in precarious situations and protect innocent lives.

We pray that You will hinder the attempts of Iran and North Korea to produce nuclear bombs and other nuclear weapons. We also pray that You will hinder the attempts of other rogue states or individuals to get nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

We pray for peace in the Holy Land. We ask that You would hinder those who are working to spread hatred and mistrust. And we ask You to put an end to the violence and the rockets.

We pray for all those who feel that they must spread their religion by means of terror and violence. Reveal Yourself to them as the Son of the living God, and show them the true path to eternal life.

We ask especially for those who would take their own lives in order to cause destruction and death among those they perceive as their enemies. Give them a revelation of what would really await them in eternity, so as to deter them from taking this fatal step and causing untold damage and heartache.

We pray for the militants. We thank You that in countries like Indonesia and Nigeria some of the jihad fighters have repented and asked for forgiveness - and they have accepted You into their hearts. So we ask, Lord, that You would continue to reveal Yourself to militants worldwide and especially to the leaders. Let them find You as their Lord and Saviour.

We pray that You would give wisdom to all those in positions of responsibility and leadership. May they seek Your will in the face of all the difficult decisions they need to make. Give them Your guidance. - Give your wisdom and guidance also to all who are working on counter-terrorism investigations.

Lord, we know that there is a spiritual dimension to the conflicts in our world. You have told us in Your Word that we are not battling against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers. Thus we pray that You would send Your angels out to battle against the forces of darkness and to defeat the strongholds of evil the world over. Let our hearts be attune to Yours in this hour that we might sense Your prayer strategy for our world. Make us faithful in prayer.

Lord, You are the Good Shepherd. Guide Your people in paths of righteousness for Your Name's sake. Come as the Prince of Peace to our world. Let us be Your instruments of peace in the world around us - and examples for others to see the joy and peace that You wish to give each one who believes in You.

We pray this in Jesus' precious Name. Amen.

Sister Gideona, 19th July 2014, ACNA meeting