



Palestinian students, members of the Al Quds University soccer team, practice backdropped by part of Israel's separation barrier in the West Bank town of Abu Dis, in the outskirts of East Jerusalem. (AP Photo/Letteris Pitarakis)

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said that, of all the decisions he has made in his life, the final decision to withdraw from settlements whose founding he himself had encouraged was the most difficult. That's quite a statement from a man that, as a general in the Israeli Army, was called upon to make decisions on the battlefield that sent many soldiers to their deaths.

Sharon did not take this decision hastily. He carefully analyzed Israel's choices and decided that unilateral disengagement was the best course of action available.

Let's take a moment to review the possible choices that Sharon had to consider: 1. Israel could hold on to all the land captured in the 1967 War,

continuing to rule over 1.5 million Palestinians. 2. Israel could put its trust in the Roadmap for Peace, hoping this peace plan would succeed where Oslo failed. 3. She could act unilaterally, withdrawing to borders that could eventually become the permanent boundaries between Israel and a Palestinian state.

Master strategist Sharon understood that Israel could not rule over 1.6 million Palestinians indefinitely. The incessant terrorist attacks and suicide bombings would eventually wear down the resolve of even the Israelis. Furthermore, pressure from the international community would ultimately become so great that it would become irresistible. Option 1 was out.

The Roadmap for Peace was really nothing more than a repeat of the Oslo Accords that ended in such disaster. Sharon believed that, to the Palestinians, the peace process was simply a tactic to be exploited until strength could be built for the next attempt to annihilate the nation of Israel completely. Sharon also understood that the deep vein of hatred for Israel that had run through the Palestinian bloodstream for the last 3,000 years would not suddenly melt away, making peace with Israel possible. Therefore he insisted that Step 1 of the Roadmap require Palestinians to stop all terror, disarm the terrorists, dismantle the terrorist entities and stop all incitement of hatred against Israel. He

stated very clearly that Israel would not enact Step 2 of the Roadmap until the Palestinians had implemented Step 1. Sharon's sixty years of experience in the Middle East told him that the Roadmap was a non-starter. In his mind, Option 2 was dead on arrival.

Unwilling to continue absorbing suicide bombing after suicide bombing, and unconvinced that the Roadmap would ever be successful, Prime Minister Sharon concluded that Israel had to take the initiative. He shrewdly calculated the maximum that Israel could lay claim to without drawing the wrath of the International Community and, more importantly, without losing the support of the United States. He very carefully crafted his plan for unilateral disengagement. Disengagement alone would not bring peace to Israel. There had to be separation of the two peoples. Only a wall could stop the continual terrorist attacks that made life in Israel unbearable.

Sharon wisely consulted with the United States concerning the route of the security wall and fence. By pre-approving the path of the fence with the U.S., he insured Israel of America's continuing support in spite of condemnation by the World Court and large segments of the international community. In exchange for the disengagement, Sharon received acknowledgement from President Bush that the United States would not expect Israel to return Palestinian refugees into Israel proper and that major Israeli population centers that stood on disputed territories would not have to be returned to Palestinian control.

The last obstacle that the disengagement plan had to overcome was the religious element in Israel, which believed that withdrawing from areas of the biblical promise land was a violation of the Torah itself. Opponents of disengagement attempted to force a nation-wide referendum on Sharon. Then they tried desperately to topple his government. The foxy prime minister fought back and outmaneuvered his opposition every time. Barring an act of God, the settlements from Gaza will be moved, by force if necessary, by July 20 of this year.

The critical question remains: Will

Sharon's disengagement plan bring peace to Israel?

Short term? Possibly yes. We know from the Bible that the Temple Mount will soon be shared between Muslims and Jews (Revelation 11:1-2). We also know that Israel's temple will be built there. These things may come to pass either as a result of implementing the Roadmap or by unilateral Israeli action.

Long-term peace? No. The prophecies are clear. After Israel's Third Temple is built, hostilities will again flair in the West Bank area. Finally, the world community (the United Nations) will take the decision to move against Israel militarily (Zechariah 14:2). This will trigger the Battle of Armageddon. All issues and scores will be settled there by none other than Jesus Christ Himself.

To understand the thinking of the religious element in Israel concerning the disengagement plan, see "Sanhedrin's Declaration Concerning the Disengagement", in this issue of Endtime. **E**

WHETSTONE

by John L. Bryant

1. Rugged in appearance and dress—prototype of John the Baptist. A. Daniel B. Elijah C. Josiah D. Lot
2. This man ate grass, had hairs like eagles feathers, and nails like birds claws. A. Jehu B. Solomon C. Nebuchadnezzar D. Rehoboam
3. He, and a companion, were preserved when other spies perished. A. Caleb B. Shaphat C. Palti D. Sethur
4. The psalmist calls upon all creatures to praise whom? A. The president B. Senators C. Dictators D. God
5. The first type of clothing made for the covering of the body. A. Silk B. Linen C. Fig leaves D. Cotton
6. If you resist him, he will flee from you. A. The devil B. The landlord C. The tax-man D. The dentist
7. What king asked if his son, Absalom, was safe? A. Ahab B. David C. Sau D. Jeroboam
8. Which book tells the story about a valley of dry bones? A. Psalms B. Zephaniah C. Amos D. Ezekiel
9. Cloven tongues of fire on the day of Pentecost, represented what? A. Speech impediment B. Evil C. Holy Ghost D. Animals bellowing
10. Of these two foundations, rock & sand on which is the better to build a house? A. Rock B. Sand
11. What metal did Solomon use to make the altar in the temple? A. Brass B. Silver C. Bronze D. Gold
12. The resurrection, angels, and the Holy Spirit were denied by whom? A. The Sadducees B. The Pharisees C. Scribes D. Publicans
13. "Give me to drink," Jesus asks the woman of which place? A. Jerusalem B. Damascus C. Nazareth D. Samaria
14. In this parable, ninety and nine sheep are in the fold. How many are lost? A. None B. One C. 25 D. 50
15. Where were the disciples first called Christians? A. Bethlehem B. Rome C. Cyprus D. Antioch
16. One of the 12 spies, the vigorous old man (85 yrs old). A. Joshua B. Caleb C. Igal D. Geuel
17. One of the Messianic types. A. The brazen serpent B. City of Nain C. Leaven D. Pharisees
18. This short epistle warns the church against immoral teachers and alarming heresies. A. Matthew B. Romans C. Jude D. Hebrews
19. He was entrusted with the caring of Jesus' mother. A. Matthew B. Luke C. John D. Andrew
20. What kind of oil was used in the lamps in the Holy Place? A. Olive B. Corn C. Peanut D. Soy bean

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