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It was evident once we met with members of the Knesset that our trip to Israel was more than a tour of the sights and the land. It became clear that we are a group of leaders upon whom there now lays a responsibility to speak out with educated hearts for Israel. It was finally sinking in that we were literally a part of history. We were just a small group of students looking for the truth in Israel, and what we found far exceeded any of our expectations...an awakening if you will.



Back in May, as members of the group were preparing for the trip, each person had what he/she may have imagined Israel to be or represent. Some were even unsure as to why they were going on this trip. Something pricked their hearts when they read the brochure and a few months later they were packing their bags. There is a mystique about Israel – after all it's the Holy land. We would walk where Jesus walked and pray where he prayed. We would see what He saw thousands of years ago as if we were right there with Him. There is more truth to that than perhaps we realized. We too would see the hearts of the people He loves so dearly. What we would see as history for His chosen people, He foresaw in that very place. As we arrived in that persecuted nation, our eyes began to open to a whole new world of reality, and now we bear the burden of truth we so eagerly sought out.

This was the first year for the Israel Experience and we weren't sure what to expect. Each day was somewhat of an adventure as we packed our schedule with as much "experience" as we could fit. Each day we traveled to some part of the country where we learned about the culture of the people and the geography of the land. It was a balance between ancient and present-day history; Holy places and current events.

The Israel Experience became our "classroom." It was unlike any course we'd ever taken before due to the intensity of the circumstances that stared us in the face. Each day we were changed and challenged to confront a reality that we have been comfortably avoiding for years. At one of our evening lectures a brilliant young man pointed out that there are "twin evils at work in the world today: Totalitarianism of the East and Moral Relativism of the West." That thought hit close to home as we reflected on the state of our colleges and universities from which we came. America has embraced moral relativism and it is being welcomed as a way of life in the hearts and minds of this young generation. The night this man shared with us marked a turning point for many members of the team as we realized that this "conflict in the Middle East" was not as isolated as we would have like to believe. Many of us left that lecture with the weighty understanding that someday we will have to answer to

our children on this very issue. What did we say and do to stop the evils of the world from overtaking the good? Did we put our lives and reputations on the line when it counted the most?

Our driving conviction is that we will be able to tell our children what we saw and how we came back to our home in America and took a stand. We were reminded on our visit to the Knesset that the great movements of history were always birthed through small groups of people. This group and the ones to come will have a story to tell for those who will listen. It is a story of persecution and oppression for Jews and Arabs alike. It is a battle of light versus darkness, good versus evil, and freedom versus bondage.

What we experienced in Israel is similar to what a stagnant generation may have seen in hindsight when looking back at the Shoah (The Holocaust). The truth we came seeking took form in an awakening in our souls that looked something like this. We saw the effects of terrorism and the leaders behind it. We now know through sites, lectures, and historical fact that the current Israeli – Palestinian conflict is not about land for peace. It is about a regime that instills hatred into its oppressed in order that the annihilation of the Jewish race would take place. It is about an ideology that will be satisfied only with the complete destruction of Israel.

We can continue to think that we can remain comfortable in our middle class lives made up of coffee and traffic jams, or we can open our eyes to the world around us. 9/11 should have awakened us to the reality that we are not immune to the evils of the world. We are just as much a target for terrorism as is Israel. Sooner or later the radical Islamic agenda will come knocking on our door and we will have no choice but to answer. This time they are not only coming for the Jews. They are also coming for us as Christians and their intent is to eradicate all freedom-loving people who do not submit to their militant worldview.

America needs an awakening to this reality. Ronald Reagan once said, "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children's children what it was once like in the United States where men were free." It is our responsibility and duty as Christians to be the ones who are the protectors of liberty in order that our posterity may live free as we have. We as the students of the Israel Experience have come to understand that silence is no longer an option. We have been given the precious gift of an educated heart for Israel and we intend to use it to fight for Israel's right to exist. The time of abdication is past and the time of activism has come. With God's help we will take a stand for Israel on our college campuses today and in the gates of cultural influence tomorrow.