

# Realistic Challenges Facing Israel Today

Written by Lynne LaMaster

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"In Israel, if you don't believe in miracles, you're not a realist," Reuven Solomon quoted, speaking last night at the Heights Church on the topic, "The Challenges Facing Israel".

In October, 2007, the Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Prescott (JCF) took a delegation of community leaders on a 9-day tour of Israel . One of those that went on the trip was Mike Fann, who later described his trip in the article, *Walking Where Jesus Walked* .

Fann explained the impact that the trip made on him, "It was a trip that you could not do on your own, and get the experience that we got. Such a flavor for their culture and their history, and to have Reuven, the guide, there to answer questions all day, every day and tell us stories and what these sites mean and the history of them and the political ramifications and going through Jerusalem and combining the history and the religious and the politics all together on what that means over there, I mean, how do you do that when you just go on vacation?"

Yes, the same Reuven that Fann spoke of so highly, was the speaker last night at the Heights Church , here to offer insight into the history of the modern country of Israel and a peek at the direction Israel is heading. Dan Storvick, the Senior Pastor of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church who also went on the October trip to Israel, told last night's crowd, "We were so impressed with our tour guide, Mr. Reuven Solomon, that the members of the Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Prescott asked him to come and speak to us here."

As Pam Jones, who is on the Board of Directors for the JCF introduced Solomon, she explained how he ended up being their guide in Israel. "Last October, we took a group of community leaders and thought leaders and two religious leaders, Pastor Dan and Pastor Lee, to Israel. And we requested a particular guide, we had not been there before, but we had heard great things about this man. And we requested him, and it's a good thing that we requested him early, because I think you have to book eight months in advance to get Reuven Solomon. And we were not disappointed. It was a wonderful trip."

## What are the challenges and what is being done?

The conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is documented on almost a daily basis through television and other national media. As Americans, we tend to listen casually, perhaps wondering from time to time what is Israel doing about these problems, why are the Palestinians so mad, and how did this mess get started in the first place?

To answer questions such as these, Solomon went back in history starting at about 1917 with the Balfour Declaration. As he traced the events that led to the formation of the country of Israel, he showed maps tracking how the boundaries of this tiny country developed and changed.

Fast forward in time. Despite peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan, Israel still had a problem with the Palestinians to deal with. In the year 2000, the violence erupted as suicide bombers began entering Israeli territory and killing themselves in public places, hoping to also kill as many Israelis as possible. The final solution? What Solomon call

As Solomon tracked through history to today's issues, he discussed frankly the dilemmas brought into focus by fences and walls and bombs and rockets. Yet he also spoke of optimism and opportunities for change and even, someday, peace. That is despite the very real threat from inside and outside their borders, from Hamas, Hezbollah and, of course, Iran. (See the latest threat from Ahmadinejad here.)

But, that doesn't seem to deeply concern Solomon, who finished his presentation by saying with conviction, "But guess what? We've never had it better. So there is a lot of optimism."