



November 30, 2007

BILL MOYERS: Welcome to THE JOURNAL.

Let's take a look at different perceptions of The Middle East peace talks in Annapolis this week.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Thank you for coming...

BILL MOYERS: The liberal NEW YORK TIMES found good news: "Israel and Palestinians set goal of a treaty in 2008."

PRESIDENT BUSH: ...to encourage the expansion of freedom and peace in the Holy Land.

BILL MOYERS: But the conservative NEW YORK SUN described the results with a militaristic metaphor: "Bush Declares 'Battle for Mideast.'"

As usual in the Middle East, what you see depends on who you are.

The Israeli Prime Minister once again called for Palestinians to put down their arms:

PRIME MINISTER OLMERT: We want peace. We demand an end to terror, an end to incitement and to hatred.

BILL MOYERS: For his part, the Palestinian President once again called on Israel to leave the west bank territory it seized in the Six-Day War forty years ago - making way for East Jerusalem to be the capitol of a Palestinian state:

PRESIDENT ABBAS: We need East Jerusalem to be our capital -- a capital where we will have open relations with West Jerusalem.

BILL MOYERS: But Israel has already carved up the West Bank with settlements and with a wall that snakes through the territory, cutting Palestinian neighborhoods off from one another.

In Gaza at least 100,000 Palestinians protested the Annapolis meeting. The demonstrations were organized by Hamas, Israel's most hostile adversary, who was not invited to Annapolis. One of its leaders put his fellow Palestinian, Abbas, on notice: "No compromise with Israel." Another insisted: "We will not give up one grain of the land of Palestine, and we will never recognize Israel."

Just miles away in Jerusalem, thousands of Israelis gathered near the ancient western wall and prayed for God to make sure the Annapolis meeting failed.

...several rabbis issued a statement saying, "There is a strict religious ban on giving parts of the land of Israel to foreigners, especially to the Palestinians who are enemies and hate us."

So once again it is the extremists who insist on the last word in The Middle East, invoking god as they do. Israel has its religious die-hards, the Palestinians have theirs, and here in the United States, we have them, too.

SOT: Let us destroy them as a nation, that the name of Israel be remembered no more.

BILL MOYERS: Some of them protested outside the Annapolis meeting...

SOT: No two-state solution!

BILL MOYERS: On Monday, as Bush met with Abbas and Olmert at the White House, his National Security Advisor was meeting down the hall with religious groups who believe Israel belongs to the Jews.

Among them was the organization Christians United for Israel - also known as CUF1.

One of its directors called Annapolis a "diplomatic lynching" of Israel.

Just who is CUF1? Some of you will remember our report earlier this fall. Let's take another look at it, and then we'll be back to discuss what we see.

VOICE: The Lord utters his voice before his army...The Lord utters his voice before his army.

BILL MOYERS: Washington. July 17. A night to honor Israel.

VOICE: Blow the trumpet in Zion, Zion!

BILL MOYERS: Over 4,500 people from every state in the union and ten countries ...celebrate their solidarity with Israel...They call their organization Christians United for Israel...Most are evangelical Christians...CUFI - as it's known - is not even two years old, and it's already a force to be reckoned with. The man behind it is pastor John Hagee. JOHN HAGEE (at NIGHT TO HONOR ISRAEL): When 50 million evangelical bible-believing Christians unite with five million American Jews standing together on behalf of Israel, it is a match made in heaven.

BILL MOYERS: Pastor Hagee is one of the Christian right's most powerful preachers. Israel is his passion.

JOHN HAGEE: Let us shout it from the housetops that a new day has been born in America. The sleeping giant of Christian Zionism has awakened. If a line has to be drawn, draw the line around Christians and Jews. We are united. We are indivisible. And together we can reshape history.

BILL MOYERS: Christian Zionists believe Jews are God's chosen people...that God promised the land of Israel to their patriarchs and their descendants. They say that the Bible requires Christians to give unconditional support to the Jewish people...to be a "good friend" to Christianity's "big brother."

REV. CHRISHELLE BRUCE: The new Christian of today that is truly walking in the spirit of God will have to acknowledge Israel. There is no way around that. You have to.

GREG STEPHENS: Israel is the only country that God ever established. Every other country has been established by a king or a queen or a congress or a parliament. It's the only country that God ever established.

BILL MOYERS: John Hagee says you need look no further than the scriptures... JOHN HAGEE The biblical mandates for supporting Israel began with Genesis 12: 3. I will bless those who bless you and I will curse those who curse you. Secondly, David said in Psalms 122,6, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. They shall prosper that love you." Because of the fact that his-- in history, if Jerusalem is at war, the world is at war. If there's peace in Jerusalem there's peace in the world.

JOHN HAGEE: When Israel became a state, in 1948 I remember well sitting at the table in

our home and we heard that announcement come over the radio. And my father said, "This is the most important biblical day in the 20th Century. For all the prophets of the Old Testament have now been vindicated and Israel has been born."

JOHN HAGEE:(Hagee preaches): Free is free indeed! Give me praise and glory in the house of God!

BILL MOYERS: From the 18,000 people who belong to his church in San Antonio, TX...to the 99 million homes he says tune into his weekly radio and television broadcasts...John Hagee has built an empire sharing the gospel of Israel with evangelicals around the world...and as the leader of CUFI...his power extends from the pulpit to politics.

JOHN HAGEE: (at CUFI CONFERENCE) I would like to read you the greeting from the President of the United States. I appreciate CUFI members and all event participants for your passion and dedication to enhancing the relationship between the United States and Israel. Your efforts set a shining example for others and help lay the foundation of peace for generations to come. Laura and I send our best wishes for a memorable event. May God bless you. George W. Bush, president of the United States.

BILL MOYERS: At their July gathering in Washington, CUFI delegates focused on Israel's security and the threat of radical Islam...

CLIFFORD MAY: ...Islamic imperialists and supremacists...

BILL MOYERS: ...And...on their agenda... lobbying in Congress for their pro-Israel platform.

DAVID BROG: Ladies and gentlemen, we're in Washington, DC. We're going to talk to our congressmen so it's extremely important that we take our faith and our values and we marry it with knowledge and understanding of current events. And be able to speak in the language of Washington when we go and speak to our congressmen and senators.

BILL MOYERS: With Hagee leading the way, CUFI delegates walked the halls of congress...armed with talking points, they divided into small groups to call on individual senators and representatives.

SOT: Cheer, cheer, cheer!

BILL MOYERS: In the basement of the capitol, Georgia's delegates talked strategy before meeting their elected leaders.

SCOTT ALLEN: Also during the meeting, as-- Pastor Haun-- Dr. Haun or I make a point, feel free to clap. You know, we want it a little bit lively, but we don't want to be crazy. Right? So-- feel free to clap. And they know we're Christians United for Israel. You can say, "Amen," if you want to.

BILL MOYERS: Republican representative Phil Gingrey paid the delegation a visit. He's considered one of the most conservative members of the House. **PHIL GINGREY:** I think what you'll find in the Congress is a very, very strong bipartisan support for the country of Israel. And that's something that we all seem to agree upon. It's a democracy in a bad neighborhood...

BILL MOYERS: The delegates wasted no time getting to one of their top concerns - the disputed territories and the Israeli peace process.

FEMALE VOICE: The land for peace obviously didn't work in the Gaza Strip. And we're proponents that we don't give up any more land. It didn't work. And anything else was just going to cause further loss of land in the state of Israel.

PHIL GINGREY: Yeah. I mean, I think it's a good point. And but on the other hand, I would urge Israel not to put a stick in the eye of the Palestinians if they don't have to.

VICKI LEEMAN: I think you need to hear clearly, sir, that this group is totally against giving any of Israel's land) for peace.

BILL MOYERS: There is no room for compromise here. Christians United for Israel opposes the Bush administration's roadmap for peace and urges American leaders to abandon it. The plan calls for a two-state solution in the region - if Palestinians lay down their arms and recognize Israel's right to exist, Israel will withdraw from certain disputed territories ...and move to help create an independent Palestine. For these believers...the roadmap is inherently flawed because it is not biblically sound...as Hagee often preaches to his congregation...

JOHN HAGEE: But the Palestinians have never owned the land. I want you to hear this very clearly. The Land of Israel was given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their seed in an eternal covenant. It is recorded in the book of Genesis. The boundaries are there in the Bible. And that land belongs to the Jewish people today, tomorrow and forever because it is their covenant by the word of God.

BILL MOYERS: According to John Hagee, devastating consequences await those who violate God's word...God, he says, may already have sent hurricane Katrina to punish the U-S for its role in helping Israel remove Jewish settlers from the Gaza strip.

JOHN HAGEE: I want to ask Washington a question. Is there a connection between the 9,000 Jewish refugees being forcibly removed from their homes in the Gaza Strip now living in tents and the thousands of Americans who have been expelled from their homes by this tremendous work of nature? Is there a connection there? If you've got a better answer, I'd like to hear it.

BILL MOYERS: Back in Washington, CUFI delegates were briefed on what the organizers now consider the defining issue - the challenge of radical Islam.

GARY BAUER: At this very moment there are evil men who worship death. It is a sick philosophy that goes by many names. But I haven't found a better name than Islamofascism because it summarizes what we are up against.

FRANK GAFFNEY: The Islamofascists have Israel in mind as an appetizer. We are the main course.

BRIGITTE GABRIEL: The difference, my friends, between Israel and the Arabic world is a difference between civilization and barbarism. It's a difference between goodness and evil. And this is what we're witnessing in the Arabic world. They have no soul. They are dead set on killing and destruction. Israel's enemies are our enemies.

BILL MOYERS: In New York last week, CUFI members took to the street to protest the visit of Iranian president Ahmadinejad. They see him as the number one threat to Israel...and the world.

JOHN HAGEE: The head of the beast of radical Islam in the Middle East is Iran and its fanatical president Ahmadinejad. Ladies and gentlemen, we are reliving history. It is 1938 all over again. Iran is Germany. Ahmadinejad is Hitler. And Ahmadinejad, just like Hitler, is talking about killing the Jews.

AHMADENIJAD: All of the world's monotheistic religions...

BILL MOYERS: Ahmadinejad has said that Islam would soon reign supreme in a world without the United States and Zionism and that quote...Israel should be wiped off the map.

AHMADENIJAD: The Iran of today is a nuclear Iran...

BILL MOYERS: As Iran has been actively enriching uranium, the world has been scrambling to determine how it will be used - as an energy supply or as a weapon to make good on Ahmadinejad's threats to Israel.

SOT: Clap, clap, clap!

CUFI DELEGATE: Congressman, we love you. You're a fellow Georgian.

BILL MOYERS: At the capitol building...the CUFI delegation from Georgia urged representative Lynn Westmoreland to recognize the danger Iran poses. But the greatest threat that's facing us is Iran.

WESTMORELAND: That's right.

CUFI DELEGATE: And the nuclear capability that they are soon reaching. And hopefully we, as Americans, will not allow that to happen.

JOHN HAGEE: What we are trying to say to them is that a) we want you to continue your support for the State of Israel. Secondly, we want you to recognize that Iran is a clear and present danger to the United States of America and Israel. And we support Senator Joseph Lieberman, that it's time for our country to consider a military preemptive strike against Iran if they will not yield to diplomacy. And if they continue the pursuit of nuclear weapons we must not allow them to manipulate the economy of the world because they have a nuclear weapon.

JOHN HAGEE: As we speak Iran is building nuclear weapons...

BILL MOYERS: For John Hagee, what happens in Iran is not just a matter of politics - it's also a matter of theology. His study of biblical prophecy has led him to believe that Iran will figure prominently in the end times - the apocalypse and the return of Jesus.

JOHN HAGEE: Iran will use those weapons on Israel. Anyone who is smart enough to wave bye-bye knows that.

BILL MOYERS: In his book Jerusalem Countdown, he writes, "Iran with nuclear weapons will transform the Bush administration's roadmap for peace program into a racetrack to Armageddon." From his reading of the bible he lays out a scenario predicting that if Israel and America attack Iran, Russia and its allies - including Iran - will attack Israel, triggering Ezekiel's war. God will crush the invading forces as - quote - "He crushed pharaoh, Haman, and Hitler so that Israel and the world will know that I am the lord." says John Hagee, the battle of Armageddon will follow...

JOHN HAGEE: They intend to bring that bomb online and if they use it, you think gas is high now. Life as we know it is going to change instantly and forever and I'm telling you, you need to get your life ready to meet the son of God in all his glory. It's going to happen, it's going to happen, it's going to happen.

CONGREGATION: Clap, clap, clap!

JOHN HAGEE: There are going to be people in this tribulation period who do not take...

BILL MOYERS: There will be plenty of bloodshed...

JOHN HAGEE: They will have their heads cut off...

BILL MOYERS: But get ready - it's coming.

JOHN HAGEE: We are this close to the rapture of the church of Jesus Christ...

BILL MOYERS: For true believers like Hagee and his followers, it will be a day of deliverance. They will have been raptured - literally lifted into the air - to join the lord in the heavens. End times theology has blossomed from a cottage industry into a dynamic market for books, video games and movies.

SOT: Boom!

BILL MOYERS: "The Left Behind" movie series is so popular it shows up in sermons around the country...John Hagee even had a cameo appearance in it. But because end times theology strikes a lot of people as threatening - especially as it relates to the fate of Jews - Hagee strikes it down at political gatherings of CUFI.

REPORTER: I wanted to ask you, you've written a lot about bible prophecy and the relation, relationship to ...

BILL MOYERS: He brushed aside questions about it at this press conference in Washington...

JOHN HAGEE: I can make it very clear for you. Our support of Israel has absolutely nothing to do with End Times prophecy. It has absolutely nothing to do with eschatology. We support Israel because we feel Israel is in greater danger right now than in any time in statehood.

BILL MOYERS: So as the head of CUFI, with prominent politicians present - Hagee continues to insist that the peace and security of Israel is an end in itself but...as a pre-eminent preacher of end times theology, he holds that the apocalypse is coming no matter what - events in the Middle East anticipate it - even require it.

JOHN HAGEE: Listen to me. Just as I wrote in Jerusalem Countdown, Ahmadinejad will not respond to diplomacy. He has no intention of yielding to sanctions. He's stalling for time to make nuclear weapons to attack Israel and to attack the United States. He will do it. Iran is a clear and present danger to the survival of Israel. To the United States of America and the western world-- western world. Therefore it is time for America to embrace the words of Senator Joseph Lieberman and consider a military preemptive strike against Iran to prevent a nuclear holocaust in Israel and a nuclear attack in America.

BILL MOYERS: On that, participants at the CUFI summit seem to agree: the times call for urgent action - even military action. Some of them believe wars - and rumors of war - are part of God's plan.

SCOTT FARHART: You know, the Bible says to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, pray for the peace of Israel. I don't know if it's actually possible-- the whole Armageddon, end of the world is all going to happen there. So there's always going to be people striving for peace. I think it's our duty to pray for peace. I don't know that peace will ever happen until Jesus comes back and reigns in that city and is the ruler of that city, that's-- that's when we'll have peace.

TYRONE MORGAN: We're living in times of fulfillment of what the Bible said will come in the last days. And we're living in those times. We're seeing that fulfilled before our eyes literally. And-- the things that are happening in Israel, around Israel are just part of what the Bible said would happen.

DONNA MORGAN: The Bible says that there has to be wars. And it says in the end times there will be wars, and for us not to get-- not to worry, because there has to be a stand. And God is drawing a line in the sand. He's saying, "You really want to get Christian. You really want to support Israel." Okay. It's time to take a stand. And the rest of world needs to know that. If you really call yourself a Christian if you really love Israel, it's time to take a stand now before it's too late.

[CONTENT REPLACED ON SOME STATIONS BY PLEDGE BREAKS]

BILL MOYERS: We like to hear from you to know what you're thinking of THE JOURNAL. So right now we want to share some of your comments that have had us talking. When we first aired our report about the group Christians United for Israel, we had an avalanche of responses, like these:

READER: Watching Bill Moyers report on John Hagee...made me realize how the media

misrepresents the facts to further ideological agendas. Pastor Hagee did call for an attack on Iran not to foment apocalyptic wars but because, like many other sane Americans believe, they are committed to the destruction of Israel and America and have outright said so. Their development of nuclear weapons must be stopped. Paul Oliver

READER: I sat here watching as a follower of Christ, experiencing deep shame at hearing the fanatical un-biblical comments by Mr. Hagee and his followers, wondering if this picture they projected of Christianity, is what the world believes is true of Christians here in America. PJ Miller

READER: The Bible was not written to be literally interpreted. And it is certainly not a work upon which foreign policy decisions should be based. I can only hope that logic, reason, and science will prevail and help us to avoid the complete destruction of our human race. JP

BILL MOYERS: Remember our interview with investigative reporter Jeremy Scahill? He spent years digging into private contractor Blackwater.

JEREMY SCAHILL: Right now in Iraq, there are 180,000 contractors operating alongside 170,000 US troops. You no longer have to have a draft. You don't have to depend on your own citizens to fight your wars. You can simply hire up the poor of the world to work for American and British companies occupying another country.

READER: It might be good if Mr. Moyers allowed an industry perspective on this issue—There are rules, laws and regulations that apply to the 2,000 Americans doing the high-end bodyguard work in Iraq, as well as the other (largely unarmed) contractors from Iraq and around the world. Something else that Mr. Scahill too often leaves out: the overwhelming majority of contractors, including security contractors, are Iraqis, the people we would hope would be doing the security and reconstruction. Doug Brooks, President, International Peace Operations Association

READER: Never, in the discussion of the many illegal and sordid activities under the banner of secrecy...have I seen such an expansive and informative account of this mercenary approach of conducting war. What bothers me most is that people around the world may see this behavior as something that American voters and taxpayers support. Marguerita Denise Flowers

BILL MOYERS: And finally, the prolific Katherine Newman gave us insight into what she calls the 'missing class.'

KATHERINE NEWMAN: There are over 50 million Americans--who are in the missing class or the near poor. And that's quite a bit more than the 37 million who are officially poor. And about whom we worry a lot more in terms of policy. And we should. But the missing class is a very large number of people. And it's over 20 percent of the nation's children as well.

BILL MOYERS: Here's what a couple of you had to say.

READER: Maybe the truth of the matter is the American people just don't care about the Missing Class, or the Lower Class for that matter. We have developed the Bottom Line culture to such a degree that unless doing good actually results in self-gain, it's easier to let the other guy do it and wait for things to get better for me. I'm sorry, Bill, but I feel it's just too late. Capitalism won. Dick Brandon

READER: As a white woman who was blessed with a solid middle class upbringing, college grad parents, and not one but two four-year degrees of my own, still I've spent most of my 15-year professional career grossing significantly less than \$45K annually, generally with few benefits, while divorced and supporting two young children—it would have made a more powerful story had Mr. Moyers and Ms. Newman done a better job of acknowledging that the millions of "these people" in this country are in fact a much broader and better educated group than was implied. We are everywhere. Jeanine Dahl

BILL MOYERS: Keep your comments coming - by mail, e-mail, or on the blog at pbs.org and we'll keep reading.

[CONTENT REPLACED ON SOME STATIONS BY PLEDGE BREAKS]

BILL MOYERS: Someone who didn't know better could imagine from the very name Christians United For Israel - CUFI -that pastor John Hagee speaks for all Christians. Well, he doesn't.

Like other faiths, Christians are a motley lot. For example, the last time I checked there were at least 27 varieties of Baptists in America, and I can tell you from first hand knowledge, Baptists differ profoundly in how we read the Bible, how we read history, and how we read election returns. Evangelicals come in hundreds of sizes and shapes, and CUFI is just one of the legions of conservative Christian organizations.

You know some of the others -- Pat Robertson and the Christian Coalition, Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority, and James Dobson's Focus on the Family.

What these fellows have forged is a close connection between the White House and the religious right.

But they don't represent all evangelicals -- not even close. Look at this letter to President Bush from evangelicals who don't belong to CUFI: "We affirm your clear call for a two-state solution" "Historical honesty compels us to recognize that both Israelis and Palestinians have legitimate rights stretching back for millennia." and... "Israelis and Palestinians must both accept each other's right to exist."

Thirty-four leading evangelical leaders signed that letter in July.

And just this week, in the wake of the Annapolis meeting, another statement by evangelicals was issued calling for the creation of a Palestinian state. This time, over 80 evangelical leaders signed... including this man, Ron Sider, who's with me now. Ron Sider is one of the leading evangelicals who signed both declarations of Christian policy. He's the president of evangelicals for social action and he teaches theology at Palmer Seminary at Eastern University theology, ethics and politics.

His many books include, "Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger" named one of the most influential books in religion in the 20th century ; "The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience" which won Christianity today's top award and the forthcoming "The Scandal of Evangelical Politics", which is due out in January.

Also joining us is M.J. Rosenberg, who has spent his career in the secular politics of Middle East policy, first as an editor at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, known as AIPAC, then for almost fourteen years as a congressional aide on Capitol Hill. Since 1998, he's been the director of policy analysis for the Israel Policy Forum, or IPF, which promotes a two-state solution to the conflict in the Middle East. He also writes the weekly "IPF Friday", a popular opinion column on the Arab-Israeli conflict....

Welcome to both of you. What do you think when you hear John Hagee calling for military strikes on Iran?

RON SIDER: I mean, that's absolutely scary. I think it's abominable. But if he were representing a majority of evangelicals, then I would be really frightened. But the evangelical standard, the vast majority simply don't agree at all with that.

M.J. ROSENBERG: Well, we haven't-- you know, as a Jew, what scares me about him is that he sees us-- he sees Jews and Israelis as part of this divine plan rather than seeing us as people-- as, you know, as actors on the human stage, as just people. Israel was established not to fulfill prophecy. It was established after the Holocaust to be a secure refuge for Jews. And to have these thousands and there are hundreds of thousands of people out there, it doesn't matter if it's a small percentage of evangelicals, it's lots of people, who would take me and my friends and relatives in Israel and sort of, like, use us

in their religious, you know, in their religious visions, a vision that ends, of course, with the demise of Jews and lots of other people as well. That's the part I find frightening. I mean, and I really do. It's-- and it's-- I think it's unsettling to most Jews.

RON SIDER: Yeah, I understand the problem. But don't worry about it too much. I mean, if you really are clear that this is just a minority voice on the fringe of the evangelical world then it's not nearly as frightening. The evangelical world, you know, represents a quarter of American voters. But the vast majority simply don't agree with Reverend Hagee.

P>BILL MOYERS: But Ron, when we say-- when you say that they're a fringe group, you've got in that conference in Washington John McCain, Newt Gingrich-- Rick Santorum-- Gary Bauer, big players in the political-- conservative political movement in this country. That doesn't strike me as fringe.

RON SIDER: Well, they certainly represent, you know, a number of people. Enough that those vote, you know, would like to get their votes. But, you know, President Bush sent them a letter, even though his own position is totally contrary to what their own position is. So the fact McCain showed up doesn't mean that he agrees with them. It just means that, you know, there's some voters that he'd like to get.

M.J. ROSENBERG: That's a good-- that's the good news about Annapolis. I mean, the fact of the matter is these people in theory have access to President Bush., and yet Bush went ahead with Annapolis anyway, which shows that they're not really dictating U.S.-Middle East policy.

RON SIDER: My group met with Condoleezza Rice. There were just six of us. It was the folk who had led to the Bush letter and now to the subsequent evangelical declaration on Israel-Palestine. And she said it would be extremely important for the public to know that a large number of evangelical leaders are in favor of a two-state solution.

BILL MOYERS: But here's the issue, it seems to me, as a journalist. The heart of the message of CUFI is that Israel must not negotiate with the Palestinians. The president this week says there will be a negotiation. If serious negotiations occur, won't they try to thwart it?

M.J. ROSENBERG: They will try to thwart it. But they're not politically as significant as the people within the Jewish community that will try to thwart it. The fact of the matter is--

BILL MOYERS: What do you mean?

M.J. ROSENBERG: Well, for instance, I mean, there are lots-- as you know, there are lots of right wingers, hard liners in the Jewish community, within the Jewish lobby that are not comfortable with a Palestinian state or with the United States promoting a Palestinian state. Those people are far more influential than CUFI because they're involved in politics in both parties. CUFI is almost exclusively Republicans. The Democrats are as closely as hard lined elements in the Jewish community as the Republicans are. They are the ones that matter politically. I don't think that CUFI matters that much politically. The other thing is the hard liners within the pro-- in the Jewish community give campaign contributions based on that issue. The CUFI people don't. They don't have nearly as much sway. One, they're in the pocket of the Republican Party. Republicans don't really have to court CUFI; they got them. I-- and I think that that makes them weaker politically than if, you know, I-- after all, nothing Hillary Clinton's going to do is going to cause them to vote for her.

BILL MOYERS: Which is more powerful, Christians United for Israel or AIPAC?

M.J. ROSENBERG: There's no comparison. Christians United for Israel is a big organization but does not cut a-- it's not a major figure on the Washington scene. AIPAC is about as big a lobby as it gets. AIPAC is much more-- more important.

RON SIDER: And the politicians know that CUFI represents only a minority. I mean, if, in fact, they represented the vast majority of the evangelical world, Bush would have to be a lot more careful. Condoleezza Rice couldn't go ahead with the kinds of things she's doing because evangelicals are enormously important for Bush-- and the Republican Party.

M.J. ROSENBERG: And they can't-- and they--

RON SIDER: But they know they don't represent the majority.

M.J. ROSENBERG: And they can't walk away. I mean, the fact of the matter is the CUFI people are going to vote Republican. When you're entirely in one camp, you just-- people don't have to pay much-- Bush doesn't have to pay attention to them. Where are they going to go?

BILL MOYERS: Ron, are you comfortable with Christian Zionists supporting Israel?

RON SIDER: Well as an evangelical I'm certainly committed to supporting the security of Israel. Everybody who signed my letter in the new declaration agreed that the United States should support Israel. We want Israel to have a security, peace, a democratic state in the Middle East on into the indefinite future. That's not at issue. What we're saying is precisely in part for the security of Israel and in part for the sake of justice, there has to be a negotiated two-state solution so that the Palestinians have hope for a fair state, for an economic future that's viable. And the vast majority of the evangelical world agrees with that.

BILL MOYERS: How many evangelicals are there in this country?

RON SIDER: Oh-- you know, with different polls and different studies that say different things. But a quarter of the American voters. Eighty, 90 million people. It's a huge segment. What's emerging in the present time, and it's huge in terms of change and impact, is that there's an evangelical center emerging. You know, the stereotype was that Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, you know, the religious right represented the evangelical world. They never did. But now we've got a-- an evangelical center emerging that is much, much broader. It's saying that faithful evangelical civic engagement must have a biblically balanced agenda. And that means you've gotta be concerned about sanctity of human life but also the poor. With the family but also with racial justice and creation care.

M.J. ROSENBERG: You know, there's really a similarity between what you describe and the Jewish community at large. The perception of the Jewish community is that we're concerned only about Israel and that is the thing that drives the community. Israel is one issue that we care about. Fact of the matter is the American Jewish community is the most liberal religious grouping in the United States. And if you look at Jewish organizations, AIPAC is one organization, a very well-known organization. It has 100,000 members. Its focus is only on Israel. But our long-time larger historic organizations, you know, American Jewish Committee, B'nai B'rith, Anti-Defamation League, American Jewish Congress. You know what their number one issue has always been? First Amendment and separation of church and state.

BILL MOYERS: You know, one of the things that intrigues me is that as a Baptist, growing up as a Baptist, I knew that Jews were our best companions in the struggle for the separation of church and state. And yet here you have both Southern Baptists throughout this country now and American Jews-- involved with a theology that intertwines with the state in the case of Israel and the United States. So what's happened to the tradition of the separation of church and state among Jews who have long fought for it but now welcome the embrace of a John Hagee?

M.J. ROSENBERG: Well, I think it's probably, you know, some Baptists and some Jews have forgotten their history. I think that's the main thing. I do think that most Jews, though, still, if you ask them to-- what's the issue that's most important to them, it is the fact that we be protected in this country as a minority. America has been the best home that the Jews have ever had in history. The establishment cause means something to us because if religion is established here, it's not going to be ours. There's not-- there's no such thing as the Judeo-Christian faith. There's the Christian faith. We are a minority community, like the Muslims are, like the other minority groups. It's very important to us, to every Jew that there be separation. I think what happens what you see at this with Hagee and AIPAC, you know, it's a very-- it's just an expedient temporarily-- temporary alliance.

BILL MOYERS: But in the long term, as Keynes said, we might all be dead.

M.J. ROSENBERG: Right.

BILL MOYERS: And if these people have their way, I mean, a strike on Iran, a one-sided position in Israel... I mean, that's volatile. That creates a combustion, doesn't it?

M.J. ROSENBERG: Well, especially now when you-- the fact is if you're virulently anti-Palestinian, you're anti-Israel. 'Cause there's no peace for Israel, no security for Israel unless there's security and statehood for the Palestinians. So when people get up there and say no Palestinian state, the Palestinians are terrorists, the Muslims are a terrible threat to us all, that jeopardizes Israel's future. And that's why you have someone like Prime Minister Olmert, who was a right-winger his whole life, who now sits down with Abbas and says, "We have a partner and it's the goal of Israel to help create a Palestinian state." That's what the prime minister says.

RON SIDER: You know, what I think is exciting is that a majority of the evangelical world, you know, wants to join with the majority of the Jewish world in saying now is the time. Let's make that happen. And I think if we can join forces, which is really possible-- we can, in fact, encourage-- hopefully even push, you know, the American-- U.S. administration to be vigorous. Because I don't think this is going to happen in the next year or whenever, it's-- unless the U.S. president and, you know, the secretary of state push really hard.

BILL MOYERS: I appreciate the fact that you both are optimistic if not benign toward CUFJ and people like that...But it's always the radicals and the fanatics in the Middle East who have the last word. I mean, look, when Prime Minister Rabin was moving toward a-- a-- the same kind of peaceful solution, he was assassinated by a right-wing Jewish student, who killed him and said, "I did it because God told me to." You both are optimistic about this process--

M.J. ROSENBERG: Well, I don't feel benign about Hagee. I-- my wife is a-- my wife's parents are Holocaust survivors. My wife was born in a refugee camp in Germany, came to America in 1950. The fact of the matter is Israel to us is really, really important. And so is this place, which was the sanctuary for my wife's family, for my family, for my kids. Hagee threatens our place here. I'm not benign about him. I'm just kind of thinking, well, there are more like him and that's a good thing. That's not benign.

BILL MOYERS: Is there a biblical basis for supporting Israelis more than Palestinians? You-- I mean, you both-- Jew and Christian, read Genesis 12:3, quote, as John Hagee does, "I will bless those who bless you." How do you read that differently from Hagee?

RON SIDER: Well, there's another text just a couple chapters on in Genesis 15 where God says to Abraham that he and his descendants will have all the land from the Nile to the Euphrates. Now, if Hagee thinks that all the promises about the land in the Old Testament apply to the State of Israel now, that would mean that he thinks that Israel ought to take over part of Egypt, all of Lebanon and Jordan and most of Syria and half of Iraq. I mean, that's just silly. You know, there has to be a compromise on land.

M.J. ROSENBERG: I don't look at Israel at all in biblical terms. I look at it entirely as this is the place that the Jews once lived thousands of years ago. And if we had had access to it during the 1930s and 1940s, six million Jews who were dead now would have been able to go there and live. It's a viable, dynamic, wonderful, exciting place that, unfortunately, it has not been able to live up to its potential because of this endless war. So what I want for Israel and for the Palestinians as well, these are two people who, working together, can make this region, make the holy land truly a light unto the nations, which is-- if you want to talk about the Bible, that is what it's intended to be. Israel should not be a place that teaches the world about military science. It should be a place where, you know, diseases are cured and it offers all kinds-- a-- a much better life to everyone in the world. I want peace for those people.

BILL MOYERS: I understand that. But don't the fanatics and the radicals always have the last word in the Middle East?

RON SIDER: Not always. I mean I think that's simply too pessimistic. There's always a danger of you know, a radical assassinating somebody. But it depends to a large extent, Bill, on whether or not the vast majority who want peace rise up-- organize-- insist that now is the time. We can, in fact pressure the U.S. and the U.S. can play an important role in encouraging the Israelis and Palestinians that, no, the last word doesn't necessarily rest with radicals. But it'll take a lot of activity, vigorous activity on the part of people who are in the center and care and want justice and peace for everybody.

M.J. ROSENBERG: I mean, if you look at Egypt, I mean, E-- Saddat did this incredible thing of making peace with Israel. He was in fact, assassinated for it. But the peace has lived on. And not a single Israeli or Egyptian has died in a war between-- or any hostile fire between these two countries in 30 years.

BILL MOYERS: Egypt and Israel?

M.J. ROSENBERG: Egypt and Israel. So to me -- that's also Jordan and Israel -- I mean, there is peace. It's not like Israel is no longer an island in a hostile sea.

BILL MOYERS: But in this country the right wing, the radicals, if you will, you call them radicals, they are radicals. They're organized. They have the money. They have this alliance with the Republican Party. And AIPAC and others make it impossible for Democrats to have the kind of conversation that you're having here. I mean, you don't hear this debate in the Democratic debates, do you?

M.J. ROSENBERG: You don't. And that's-- it's so amazing that no one asks the candidates about Israel and Palestine in debates, ever.

BILL MOYERS: Why?

M.J. ROSENBERG: I think the reason they don't ask is that they know what the candidates are going to say is, "I love Israel. I stand with Israel. Israel is great." End of the discussion.

BILL MOYERS: Why?

M.J. ROSENBERG: Because they are intimidated. What hap-- what--

BILL MOYERS: By?

M.J. ROSENBERG: By the lobby which basically does not want a debate on this issue. But, you know, I don't blame the lobby. I blame the politicians. They're not going to lose their seats in Congress. They're not going to lose the presidency because they endorsed a two-state solution. The-- it is not losing that they're afraid of. They're afraid of getting any static from a couple of right wing donors. I mean, I really-- I'm not-- it's not--

BILL MOYERS: It's not just a--

M.J. ROSENBERG: Okay.

BILL MOYERS: --I mean, you have seen the candidates for Congress lose because of opposition from supporters of Israel.

M.J. ROSENBERG: You know what? I think that the only people say that candidates for Congress have lost because of that opposition is, one, the lobby itself to tout its own power. And those candidates who lost for other reasons and want someone to blame. No, I can go over those case by case--

BILL MOYERS: Yeah, but-- but in your newsletter you keep talking about the power of the lobby to intimidate the discussion among Democrats in particular.

M.J. ROSENBERG: I said in--

BILL MOYERS: --talk about Barney Frank, who's a good liberal Democrat but never discusses this. You talk about Nancy Pelosi writes a letter to Bush before the Annapolis conference and says the only solution can be one that deals primarily with what Palestinians are doing and has no reciprocity from Israel.

M.J. ROSENBERG: Oh, absolutely. The-- they have a real chilling effect on debate. The thing that's really ama--

BILL MOYERS: More so than CUFI, don't they?

M.J. ROSENBERG: Oh, much more. CUFI doesn't really-- I don't see them as really counting on this issue. No, they have a much more-- I go up to the Hill all the time, talk to members of Congress. And what they always are say is, "I'm with you 100 percent. I'm for the two-state solution. I know it's the best thing for America and it's the best thing for Israel. But you really don't want me to go out and say that in public." So they say, like, in my heart I agree with you. But that's not good enough.

RON SIDER: I think that MJ's basically right on that. And I'm sorry about that. I wish they did. I wish they had the political courage to-- in fact, say what they think. Because I mean, it's really momentous in terms of the U.S. and the history of the world and our foreign policy. Because 1.3 billion Muslims in the world tend to judge the U.S. and see it through the lens of Israel-Palestine. And all those Muslims perceive the U.S. as very one-sided. If we would solve the Israeli-Palestinian problem, that would remove one major problem in the huge dangerous relationship between the U.S. with its large Christian majority and the Muslim world.

M.J. ROSENBERG: And, you know, on top of it, you have in the Jewish community some 70 percent of our community supports the two-state solution, supports the peace process, supports what Bush tried to do this week in Annapolis. But under our current system, it isn't majorities that matter, it's special interest groups based in Washington. It's a problem with our system right now and how it works.

BILL MOYERS: What do you think after Annapolis?

RON SIDER: I'm cautiously optimistic. I think it's new to have the leaders of Palestine and Israel say they're going to meet every two weeks. And I hope they, in fact, do it. It's clearly a new commitment on the part of President Bush to make this an important issue and to use his influence. I think Condoleezza Rice has been close to brilliant in bringing it together. And she clearly, that was one thing that came clear in our meeting with her. She is passionate about this, is ready to use all of her energy and skill--

BILL MOYERS: Two-state solution?

RON SIDER: Oh, absolutely. She-

RON SIDER: Yeah. She thinks that this is absolutely essential for the U.S. I mean, Condoleezza Rice said in our meeting that the basic parameters of a solution and agreement are clear to everybody. They've been there for some time. What's needed is the psychological breakthrough that can let us say what we all know has to happen. And one of the things that has to happen is a recognition of Israel as a Jewish state.

BILL MOYERS: Can peace take on its own momentum now, do you think? We've seen the demonstrations in Gaza by the militant Palestinians. We saw the demonstrations led by rabbis in the heart of Jerusalem opposed to Annapolis. We've seen CUFI send 12,000 and more letters to the White House opposing the Annapolis conference. I mean what gives you two fellas any feeling that on the ground this can work its way out?

RON SIDER: Well, partly-- is the-- some of the geopolitical concerns. I mean, right up front for all of the players at Annapolis is the fact that they're scared stiff of Iran and Hamas and more and more in league with Iran and-- and the terrorists and radicals are

getting more and more power. So that's pushing everybody to move ahead. That's going for us. But only if large numbers of Americans in the center really get serious about encouraging this approach and really push now, only then will it happen.

M.J. ROSENBERG: I go to Israel all the time. And what keeps me going and being optimistic is the remembrance of 1999. 1999 was the best year in the peace process. It was when the Israelis and the Palestinians, with the help of the United States, with the CIA, were doing security cooperation. There was no terrorism in Israel for a period of, like, 2 1/2 years. The Palestinians started to-- their economy was getting better. The Israelis felt safe. And Israel felt just wonderful. And we had a moment, my wife and I visited her family in Tel Aviv. They are very right-wing. They are very religious. They don't like Arabs very much. And all they kept talking about was how they loved going shopping in the West Bank and how nice the Palestinians were and how surprised they were. And we-- my wife and I just smiled at each other and thought, you know, this is incredible. And later we realized they want-- both people are hurting so much that anything you could give them that offers hope, they're going to grab. So I'm optimistic. I'm optimistic about these two people, the Israelis and the Palestinians.

BILL MOYERS: But you were optimistic in 1999. What happened?

M.J. ROSENBERG: What happened in 1999 was the failed summit of 2000. A bunch of-- Barak and Arafat both dropped the ball. Clinton did his best. I give, you know, Clinton credit there. I'm assuming, 'cause I'm an optimist, that this time we've got leaders in place who really want to go for it and learned from what happened in 2000. So that's what makes me optimistic.

RON SIDER: And I think the geopolitical situation where-- worry about Iran and the terrorism and the radicals, I think that is stronger now and--

M.J. ROSENBERG: I agree.

RON SIDER: --much more relevant--

M.J. ROSENBERG: I agree.

BILL MOYERS: Ron Sider, M.J. Rosenberg, I've enjoyed your discussion very much. Thank you for being with me.

M.J. ROSENBERG: Thank you.

RON SIDER: Thanks.

BILL MOYERS: That's it for this week. We'll be back this time next week. I'm Bill Moyers.

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