

## The Other Israel

Israel Is Different Than The Media Reports

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During this past week, I was sent an email video of an aged, bearded Muslim imam, and he was preaching his normal Friday sermon to the faithful that were assembled before him. I cannot remember what specific nation he was located in, except that it was somewhere in the Middle East. I do remember the subject of his sermon, and the manner in which he was delivering it—he delivered his message with great vigor, arms flailing all over the place, voice rising with a great deal of inflection and strength within it.

He was serious, and he complained long and loudly about the general *laziness* of his people. He compared them to workers in the Western world, in Europe especially, and most especially to Germany, and at times he even alluded to Israel. He berated the people because they had things like televisions, automobiles, clothing to wear, but virtually nothing was manufactured in their own nation. They had to buy everything from others who manufactured them outside of their nation.

He said at one time, he arrived in the early morning in Germany at 7 AM. He was being driven to the hotel where a meeting that he was to attend was being held, and he found the streets were virtually empty of people. He asked the driver, "Why are there so few people on the street?" The driver's reply was, "They are already at work." Later, when the meeting ended it—was sometime around 7 PM of the same day—he found the streets less abandoned, but still fewer people than he expected. Again he asked the driver, "Where are the people?" The driver responded, "Well, they are all at home now, eating and resting with their families and getting ready for tomorrow's work."

He then accused his hearers by saying, "While you work about two hours a day, and then spend the rest of the day talking and drinking coffee, the Europeans are working eight hours a day, producing products to sell in the marketplace." He then made a really stinging comparison when he said, "Those people. . ." He meant the Israelis, without directly naming them. He said, "They came to the same desert that we share with them, but now their desert is green"—meaning, it is producing income and making them wealthy.

I do not believe that his sermon is going to change anything in his nation. Perhaps it might inspire a few locally to change their work habits, if only to please their conscience to be a bit more productive.

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By coincidence, another email arrived this week titled, "The Other Israel." It was quite an interesting contrast to the imam's message, because the media in the United States tends to portray Israel in a very unfair, narrow, slanted way as being war-torn. But listen to this:

The bankruptcy rate in Israel during this worldwide recession is one of the lowest in the world. Their rate showed a 19% increase in bankruptcies, compared to a 45% increase in the United States, a 58% increase in Spain, and a 15% increase in Switzerland. It tends to put Israel and their economy about the same level as Switzerland. Their stock exchange, following an initial downturn of about ten or fifteen percent, rebounded by 50% by the end of July.

*The Weekly Standard*, an American publication, has a July 27—this is a pretty up-to-date—article by Willy Stern. I'm going to excerpt a few things from it on what he calls "the Mediterranean's best-kept secret."

Perhaps nowhere else on the globe does there exist a greater discrepancy between perception and reality than Israel. The press portrays the country as a savage land, wracked by war and terrorism. The reality, though is that it is a country of 7.4 million [that's just a little larger than the size of Los Angeles] whose stock market and economy are humming along quite nicely, in contrast to the rest of the globe. In Israel, life goes right on. The Western newspapers do not notice. Tel Aviv looks more like San Diego or Barcelona than Baghdad or Kabul. Israel is a world-class cultural scene. Israel has top universities, upscale restaurants, million dollar homes, hoity toity architecture, and the like.

In the fourth quarter last year, when the global economy went all to hell, Israel's quarter-by-quarter rate of gross domestic product was only off by one half of one percent, the best figure in the industrialized world. The United States was off 6.3 percent. Japan was off 12.1 percent.

What is the secret? Listen to this, fellow Americans: First, they have a very conservative banking system. There is no mortgage crisis. They have had an account surplus. They're making money since 2003. Negligible inflation. Prudent government fiscal policy. Last year, 483 Israeli high tech companies raised a whopping two billion dollars in venture capital. [Remember, this is only 7.4 million people.] Only the much larger American companies raised more. Israel is the third hottest spot in the world after Silicon Valley and Boston for high tech venture capital. Google, Microsoft and IBM have large

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research facilities there. Why? They go where the talent is. Israel produces more science papers per capita than any other nation in the world. It lacks behind only the United States in the number of companies listed on Nasdaq. Twenty four percent of Israel's workforce has a university degree, only behind the United States and the Netherlands. Israel leads the world in scientists and technicians per capita. The cell phone was developed in Israel, as well as most of Microsoft's NT operating system and the Pentium MMX chip. [I could go on and on here; he listed one after the other.] Firewall security development began in Israel.

This, brethren is the other Israel, the one that media very rarely ever mentions. All you hear about is a bomb went off here or there. But those people are over there working. Thinking about this, it's no wonder the imam was upset by the comparison. He wouldn't even mention who the people are—just "those people."

What produced this marvelous scene? I think there are two basic reasons. One is what the imam was hitting upon: the people's willingness to sacrifice themselves to **work**. The other is the invisible God working out His purpose. He has allowed those people to produce a prosperity that rivals anything in the world, and there is a reason for it. Don't you think those other countries over there do not want to pluck that plum? The only one they have to defend them is the United States, and look how the United States is treating them now. Can they trust us? Very interesting.