

“YOU ARE NOT ALONE!” HE SAID by Si Frumkin

Robert Stearns made me cry the first time I met him. I was not alone. There were about 1000 people at the dinner at the Beverly Hilton hotel. I think most of them had tears in their eyes as well.

Pastor Robert Stearns was our host that night. He is the founder of a worldwide Christian Zionist organization called “On Eagles’ Wings”. Its name is taken from a chapter in Isaiah that says “Those who honor the Lord shall rise up on the wings of eagles”.

Robert spoke to us of his love for Israel. He spoke of Jerusalem that has to remain indivisible and Jewish. He spoke of the Jewish heritage of Christianity that is so often overlooked by both Jews and Christians. He used words that Jewish leaders are often too timid to use.

And then he sang. He sang “Yerushalaim shel Zahav” – “Jerusalem of Gold”, the unofficial anthem of our holy city. And I cried. And as I looked around me I saw that I was not alone – there were tears in the eyes of the Jews who had come that night to be the guests of a Christian pastor.

Pastor Stearns was in Los Angeles again on February 18. He invited a small group – about a dozen or so of friends and supporters - to a lunch at a Japanese Kosher restaurant on Pico Blvd. We were to meet a group of students who had been sponsored by “Eagles’ Wings” to spend time in Israel learning about the country, seeing for themselves what is happening there and then returning to America to “infiltrate” (his words, not mine) political, business and social power points to help Israel.

Some of them have returned to college to create pro-Israel groups and fight the anti-Semitism and the hatred of Israel that are propagated by Muslim students and faculty members who often are subsidized by Saudi money. Others are already working in politics as interns for U.S. Senators, staffing election campaigns, developing strategies for major financial firms and more.

All of them are devoted Evangelical Christians. All of them are proud of what they are doing. They are male and female, white, black, Latino and Asian. Every year more of them are sent to Israel by Eagles' Wings – and the Israelis are grateful. In a short introductory tape we heard from politicians – Bibi Netanyahu and Natan Sharansky among them - soldiers, students, Knesset members, scientists and professors who told us how much they appreciated the Eagles' students.

One of the guests at the lunch was Shimon Erem, a retired Israeli general who lives in Los Angeles and is the chairman of the Israel Christian Nexus (ICN), an organization he founded years ago to promote cooperation between Jews and the 50 -70 million Evangelical Christians in the U.S. and Latin America. The Christians use the ICN to connect with the Israeli government, to support agricultural projects, build water reservoirs and hospitals, and generate the yearly flood of tens of thousands Christian tourists who want to visit the land – some again and again - that God has given to the Jews.

Shimon Erem was surprised when pastor Stearns asked him to say a few words.

“I didn't come here to speak,” he said. “I came to listen, to learn and to appreciate what is being done on our behalf by people who devote every single minute of their lives to fight for Israel. And, believe me, they do. There are 6 million Jews in America but most of them are too timid or too busy to do or say what the Christian Zionists do. And there are 50 million Christian Zionists and most of them are not too timid and not too busy!”

The man who spoke next was Pat Boone, a famous singer and an evangelical Christian who had been a supporter of Israel all his life. I still remember meeting him in the early 1990s when he donated a million dollars to charter planes to bring Soviet Jews to Israel from the dissolving Soviet Union. Pat Boone, wears a Magen David and a Chai on a golden chain around his neck, he is proud having

written the lyrics to “This Land Is Mine!”, the theme song for the movie “Exodus” that sold millions of records.

“I believe that America’s destiny is linked to support of Israel. I believe what is written in Genesis, that God will punish those who wrong the Jews and reward those who help the Jews. Jews have been chosen by the Lord and we have a duty to support them. I believe with all my heart that God will not help us if we don’t support Israel,” Boone declared.

Robert Stearns began his presentation with a bombshell announcement.

“The United Nations has much to answer for,” he said. “It has produced anti-Israel resolutions. It disregarded fairness and responsibility where Israel was concerned. U.N. is not a friend of Israel. This is why I am so glad to tell you that this year, on May 15, we will celebrate Israel’s 60th birthday at the United Nations, in the U.N. banquet hall. The arrangements have been made by Pastor John Hagee and myself, and you are all invited to come to New York and celebrate with us.”

He told us that the “International Day of Prayer for the Peace of Jerusalem” is now in its 3rd year. It was the brainchild of pastor Robert Stearns and pastor Jack Hayford – a man that ministers to over 3000 congregations - who declared that the first Sunday in October of every year will be observed by praying for and honoring Israel and Jerusalem. Last year it was observed in 175 countries by hundreds of thousands of Christians. Stearns expects that this year there will be millions praying for Israel.

Pastor Stearns explained the idea behind the three-weeks in Israel program, the “Israel Experience”, whose participants we were to meet.

“These are tomorrow’s leaders. Our long term goals are to identify, mobilize, train and empower student leadership on college and university campuses across America.

“Too often American Christian support has been vague and un-empowered because most Americans are not familiar enough with the history and

complexities of the situation facing Israel today to feel confident as they speak. Most congregations still do not have programs for students to go to Israel – it is our task to provide them with the opportunity to do so.

“Christian voices cannot be silent in the light of rising anti-Semitism. Our declaration is that the sin of silence committed in 1930’s Europe will not be repeated. We must find ways to empower leading Christian students to be a voice on their campuses.

”Friends! Chaverim! Remember: you are not alone!”

After the standing ovation for Robert Stearns we met the students.

I was impressed. They are aware, energetic, intelligent and knowledgeable. Most admitted that they had hardly any idea – or else a wrong idea – about Israel before going there. All seemed ready to use their talent and experience to help Israel.

The invited guests at the luncheon were a microcosm of activists within the Los Angeles Jewish community: Eugene Levin of “Almanac Panorama”; Boris Gorbis, the first Soviet immigrant to graduate Berkeley law school years ago; General Erem,; Israeli Consul for Public Affairs, Gilad Milo; one of the leading philanthropists in Los Angeles, Dina Leeds; a number of Israeli businessmen living in California; representatives from Stand With Us; several members of the Board of Directors of the Israel Christian Nexus (including myself); and other dedicated and concerned Jews who appreciated all that pastor Roberts and his 50 million Christian brothers are doing.

I can only echo a remark of one of the guests as we were leaving: “I can only wish that more Jews would be as Jewish as pastor Stearns”.