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THOUGHTS ON PEACE IN ISRAEL

Will there ever be peace between the Palestinians and Israel? A recent Gallup Poll revealed that 63% of Americans side with Israel and an even higher number (67%) are “doubtful” that there ever will be peace. Evangelical Christians almost unanimously agree that chances for peace are “slim to none.” What does the Bible have to say about this?

Prophetic scriptures do talk about Jerusalem being a “burdensome stone” (Zech. 12:3) to the nations gathered around her. This is certainly not a picture of peace. We also see that after Satan is kicked out of heaven (Revelation 12:3); he takes his wrath out on the woman (i.e., Israel). Yes, these passages forecast troubled times ahead for Israel.

However, when we read Ezekiel 38 and 39, we see an interesting prediction. This passage talks about an invasion of Israel by a confederation of nations headed up by a character called Gog of Magog. The description of Israel at the time of this invasion sheds light on when this invasion will take place. It will take place in the “latter years” after Israel has been “brought back from the sword” and is a nation gathered out of many people to a land which had been desolate (Ezekiel 38:8). This description could certainly describe modern Israel but it does not apply to any past state of Israel. Therefore, this is a future invasion.

Now it really gets interesting. The portrayal of Israel at the time of the invasion is one of a nation at peace. In the verse we just looked at, there is an added description of Israel; she will be a nation dwelling “safely.” The passage goes on to share the thoughts of Gog as he makes plans to invade Israel. *“I will go up against a land of unwalled villages; I will go to a peaceful people, who dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates.”* - (Ezekiel 38:11)

This is a prophecy concerning Israel in which she is at peace with her neighbors. The invasion is not to destroy Israel but to take “great plunder.” (Ezekiel. 38:13) Evidently during this time of peace and safety, Israel is able to acquire great wealth which the invading nations desire.

Many Bible scholars think this invasion by “Gog of Magog” and the resulting destruction of Gog’s armies by God will take place just before the beginning of the Tribulation. This will create a vacuum of leadership which

will allow an apparently unknown political leader (Antichrist) to come upon the world scene and make a 7-year covenant with the leadership of Israel (Dan. 9:27).

A study of this invasion does show us that there will be a time when Israel is not threatened by her neighbors. Will the present efforts by the nations of the world result in an effective peace treaty or could there be another answer?

The key to answering this question is to look at the nations *not* involved in the invasion. It is interesting to note that the two powers which are Israel’s immediate neighbors do not participate in the alliance of nations. Those two powers are Egypt and Babylon. Imagine the questions Ezekiel must have had when he realized the list of nations did not include Israel’s two arch-enemies of his day. Today the land these two powers occupied would include Egypt, Gaza, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq. . . all nations that harbor or support groups whose intent is to destroy Israel and prevent her from becoming a Jewish state (see our last *Light to Israel Update* on our website). It is also interesting to note that the land God promised to Abraham includes part of Egypt and Iraq and all of Gaza, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.

Psalms 83 may give a clue concerning what will happen. This Psalm of Asaph is a prayer to God to defend His people from their neighbors who want to totally destroy them so “that the name of Israel be remembered no more.” (Ps 83:4) The psalmist goes on to list the nations and then petitions the LORD to miraculously defeat them, to confuse their plans and cause these enemy nations to recognize the God of Israel.

We must understand the usage of psalms. Psalms are basically prayers and praises put into a poetic form so they can be sung or chanted. These prayer/songs often came out of real-life circumstances in which the writer praises God for His blessings or prays to God for help.

While this psalm can be taken as a prayer for victory over the enemies of God and His people, it is unique in that it specifically lists the nations and their purpose for coming against Israel. Old Testament history gives us no time when these nations formed a confederation to annihilate Israel from the face of the earth. For this reason, many

scholars believe this is a prophetic psalm and not a psalm resulting from some past threat Israel faced. This is a prayer to be used at a future time when the nations listed form an alliance for the purpose of eliminating Israel and her people so they will be remembered no more.

A study of this psalm reveals some very interesting facts which could be applied to the present day. The first fact is the purpose for the alliance of nations. *“They have said, ‘Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more.’”* (Psalms 83:4 NKJV) These words have almost verbatim been used by Hamas (Gaza) and Hezbollah (Lebanon) concerning their desired plans for Israel. The initial purpose of the PLO under the influence of Yassar Arafat according to its charter desires the *“liberation of Palestine, from an Arab viewpoint...and aims at the elimination [lit. liquidation] of Zionism in Palestine.”* Though agreeing several times to change the charter, this statement still remains in Article 15 of the charter. Thus we can see that several influential groups around and within Israel desire to see her destroyed.

The second interesting fact is the list of nations who desire to liquidate Israel. Here are nations with their corresponding modern locations:

Edom – Southern Jordan

Ishmaelites – Arabs living within the Promised Land

Moab – Central Jordan

Hagrites – Arabs living within the Promised Land

Gebal - Lebanon

Ammon – North Jordan

Amalek – (Descendant of Esau) Arabs living in the Promised Land

Philistia - Gaza

Tyre - Lebanon

Assyria – Modern day Syria, Iraq and Iran (?)

Present-day Palestinians are made up of those Arabs living in the West Bank and a majority of the Arabs living in Jordan. Lebanon today is home base of Hezbollah, and

Gaza, of course, is the base for Hamas. Thus we see a list of peoples (nations) which presently desire to see Israel destroyed.

The mention of Assyria is very interesting. The nations that make up the land formerly controlled by Assyria will not directly participate on the alliance but will encourage and support it. One of those countries is Syria which today supports Hezbollah and Hamas in their desire to eliminate Israel. Iraq today is a neutral nation in Israeli/Palestinian conflict, yet there are many supporters of the Palestinians in that land. Finally, we have Iran which openly supports those who want to destroy Israel.

History has shown that peace among warring nations only comes when a nation or alliance of nations destroys an enemy thus making it surrender and yield to the conquering power. What we may see is Israel being attacked by this alliance of nations. Because God’s reputation is at stake, He will work a miracle and allow Israel to destroy these nations resulting in a surrender and subsequent peace. Thus we

have Israel living in safety and peace when she is attacked by Gog and his forces.

No, we probably won’t see a negotiated peace between Israel and the Palestinians. We will very likely see another war. So we need to be praying. And how should we pray? Psalm 83:9-18 should be our guide as Israel faces her enemies:

1. Pray God will work a miracle as in the days of Sisera. (9-12)
2. Pray God will make the plans of Israel’s enemies like chaff in the wind. (13-17)
3. Pray that through all of this Israel and her enemies will recognize God in His power. (18)

-Larry Jaffrey