

Conflict in Gaza
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HOPE for ISRAEL

O Israel put your hope in the LORD... Psalm 130:7

Discerning the Times and the Seasons

"Now learn this parable of the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see all these things, know that [My coming] is near—at the doors!" ~Matthew 24:7-39



A WORD FROM MORAN



Dear Family,

Shalom! May the grace of our God give you peace and strength in Messiah Yeshua until the day of His return! It seems like we are getting closer to that day, and the signs of the times are all around us. One of these signs is the increase of anti-Israel sentiment around the world. During this last war in Gaza yet another wave of hatred towards Israel swept the globe; there were violent demonstrations as well as anti-Semitic attacks.

"Behold, a day is coming... [f]or I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day

of battle." Zechariah 14:1-3

We are devoting this edition of our quarterly newsletter to the most recent conflict that took place between Israel and Hamas in Gaza. I have two main reasons for this: First, it is imperative that people know the truth about the situation and what led to the Israeli operation in Gaza. The vast majority of reports coming from the media are usually very negative towards Israel, heavily biased, and one-sided. It is very important for me that you will not take this letter as a justification to hate the Palestinian people or to stand against them. The Palestinian people are victims in the power struggle of an extremist Islamist regime whose goal, in no uncertain terms, is to destroy Israel no matter what the cost, even if that cost is the lives of its own people. Throughout the conflict in Gaza, we prayed that the Lord would protect innocent Palestinians, and it is our continued prayer that they would see salvation through Yeshua.

The second reason for focusing this newsletter on the conflict in Gaza has to do with something that sits on my heart very strongly. I am compelled to exhort and prepare you, my brothers and sisters in the faith, for something that is coming and will shake us in the Body of Messiah. As we start to feel the beginning of the "birth pains" in the world around us, it is important that we are prepared for what lies ahead. According to God's Word, the nations will ultimately gather against Jerusalem, and we can see the world gearing up for that already. The

challenge for us as believers is this: are we going to be a part of the world or are we going to stand for God and His truth? Each one of us will have to make a decision on where we stand, not only with the words of our mouth but with the actions of our lives.

Gen 12:1-3 says, *"Now the LORD said to Abram...I will bless you and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."* In these verses, I don't see any middle ground. We either choose the blessed side or the cursed side. A part of saying 'yes' to our Messiah is saying 'no' to ourselves and committing our lives to Him who died and rose again on our behalf. To believe in Him, we have to accept the whole package

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Gaza and the Media War: A Heady Mixture

by Tamar Afriat

Here in our little village in the middle of Israel, all has been quiet despite everything that's been going on in our country for the last few weeks. Israeli jets often fly over our village, and we sometimes hear their rumble overhead and even a sonic boom now and again. Sometimes our children have looked anxiously at us when they have heard the planes flying overhead and asked us, "Is there a war?" In the past we have said, "No, there's not a war! Those are our fighter pilots practicing. That sound should make you feel safe, not afraid." The Israeli children in the communities bordering the Gaza strip, however, have had a completely different reality. It's hard for me to imagine what their lives have been like for the past eight years living with weekly and sometimes daily bomb sirens and making that mad dash to get to the bomb shelter within fifteen seconds before the rockets hit.

A LITTLE HISTORY...

To understand the current situation in Israel, you always need a little history first. And it's never simple. Hamas began launching rockets into Israel during the second Palestinian uprising called the Second Intifada in 2002. The numbers of kassam rockets that fell were small and the bombs themselves were poorly made and ineffective. However, Israel could not do much about it at that time because it was distracted by a much greater, more lethal problem: suicide bombers. Back then in 2002 and 2003, suicide bombings were almost a weekly occurrence in crowded public places: restaurants, bus stops, holiday reception halls, night clubs. Over a thousand Israelis were killed during the span of a few years in suicide attacks, the vast majority of them civilians. Israelis had their hands full, dealing with the carnage

in their streets to pay serious attention to a few rockets being launched from Gaza.

Israel launched an aggressive counter offensive in Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) to stop the non-stop suicide bombing. Then, just as now, the world only saw the pictures of Palestinian casualties that ensued. Their reaction to Israel then was similar to their reactions today: In 2002, members of the Norwegian committee that awards the annual Nobel Peace Prize announced that they regretted they could not recall the Nobel Peace Prize of Shimon Peres, then a Knesset member of Israel's pro-peace Labor party, who accepted the peace prize jointly with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in 1994. No mention, of course, was made of Yasser Arafat who was then openly calling for martyrs to flood Israel (which they did) and his rejection of the most comprehensive land for peace deal in 2000 at Camp David. Then the rest of Europe passed its verdict in 2003: A European Union commissioned pole that year revealed that a majority of Europeans found Israel to be the greatest threat to world peace, ahead of Iran, North Korea, and Afghanistan. The popular media in Europe began publishing anti-Semitic cartoons in major European publications that gave Nazi propaganda cartoons from World War II a run for their money.

BACK TO THE KASSAMS...

Israel successfully cracked down on terrorists groups in the West Bank and erected the security fence which together have been very successful in preventing more suicide bombings in Israel. However, each year following 2002 there was a two-fold increase in kassam rockets launched at Israel from Gaza than the previous year. In 2005, Israel enacted its Disengagement Plan to



forcefully evacuate all Jewish settlers in Gaza. Israelis who had been encouraged by their government to settle in Gaza and lived there for scores of years had to leave homes, businesses, farms and fields. Upon its withdrawal from Gaza, Israel announced that it would consider any attacks from the Gaza strip as acts of aggression to which it would respond swiftly and decisively.

In 2006, the year that Hamas defeated Arafat's Fatah party in general elections in the Palestinian territories and took control of Gaza, there was a three-fold increase of rocket attacks. In the summer of that same year, Israel was attacked by Hezbollah in southern Lebanon and was engaged in the conflict now known as the second Lebanon War. In a one month period, Hezbollah launched over 4,000 rockets into Israel (Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza are directly funded, trained, and supported by Iran). The second Lebanon War was a blow to Israel because of how poorly the government and military leaders managed the war. The country was in a crisis wondering if their military was weak and disorganized and their enemies knew it. For a while, there was a strong sense that the government and military were incapable of making strong, decisive moves.

In 2007, after the war with Hezbollah in Lebanon, there was again a two-fold increase in Kassam rockets fired into Israel bringing the number to 2,000 for that year. Hamas most likely sensed Israel was weak and distracted after the botched war in Lebanon. Israel's response to these attacks was measured: closing border crossings, cutting off electricity, small incursions into the Gaza strip to attack positions of rocket launchers. Each measure Israel took roused the international community's ire and drew protestations that Israel was not exercising proportionate force, a claim that always had us scratching our heads: "Okay, Hamas rockets destroyed two houses, a preschool, and killed two Israelis this week. Would it be proportionate force to bomb a house and a preschool in Gaza and kill two Palestinians?" 2008 brought no abatement to the rockets until Israel was able to broker a six-month truce with Hamas through Egyptian negotiators. The "truce" with Hamas did not mean a complete end to rocket attacks; Hamas simply agreed to shoot fewer rockets into Israel. In November, however, Hamas again began launching rockets in high numbers into Israel after the terms of the truce expired. Israel warned Hamas to stop bombing Israel and Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni rushed off to Cairo in a last ditch attempt to broker another truce through the Egyptians. That, of course, did not work and most of you know the rest of the story.

THE PROPAGANDA WAR: A LOSING BATTLE

During the years of the rocket attacks, I often listened to Israeli talk radio hosts agonize with their guest professors and

politicians over what to do about the constant rocket attacks on Israeli towns and cities in the south. Everyone was well aware of the fact that if Israel were to retaliate with an incursion into Gaza, there would be high civilian casualties because Gaza is so densely populated, and Israelis know well that Hamas hides behind the civilian population. For that reason, no decisive action was taken and Israeli communities were left to tremble in their bomb shelters for months and years. The Hamas leaders are brilliant tacticians, I must admit. Their attacks against Israel cannot achieve mass death and destruction because Israelis provide themselves bomb shelters, and the population is very disciplined in using them. Hamas knows that well. Hamas' strategy is different: it provokes Israel and then makes sure that as many Palestinian civilians as possible will be caught in the cross fire in Israel's ultimate counter attack.



Rocket attack.

The stories about the battles in the Gaza strip are starting to trickle out now. Though it may surprise many, Israel actually notifies all civilian areas ahead of time if they are planning bombing or military action in that area by dropping leaflets warning citizens to leave and even calling people on their phones to urge them to leave the area. We have heard that there were families that wanted to flee once they received notice from the Israelis but Hamas locked them in their homes. Though Hamas cannot win against Israel on the ground, they destroy Israel in the propaganda war. The dead women and children are paraded before the cameras and Israel's action against Gaza is called genocide. Just a week before the writing of this article, there were voices in Europe calling for Israeli commanders and soldiers to be tried for war crimes, and a top UN official released a statement stating there was ample evidence to warrant conducting a thorough investigation into possible war crimes by the Israelis in Gaza.

The January 23rd weekend edition of Israel's paper, *Yidiot Achronot*, reprinted an article by Italian journalist Lorenzo Cremonesi who is a war correspondent for the Italian paper, *Corriere Della Sera*. Cremonesi revealed some interesting findings in his article: "We're not talking about Israeli claims anymore. Civilians in the Gaza strip are telling how Hamas men broke into their homes, shot from their yards, positioned themselves next to hospitals, to schools, and next to UN installations." (Yidiot, Jan09) Additionally, Cremonesi reveals that the numbers cited by the UN Report released on January 18th, 2009 of 1,314 Palestinians killed and 5,300 wounded during the war just don't add up. (Ibid) Cremonesi visited all the major hospitals in the Gaza Strip, especially the ones in major conflict zones, and found most of the beds empty: "Whoever visits hospitals in the Gaza Strip these days has to ask himself, 'Where are all the thousands of wounded the Palestinians were reporting?'" (Ibid) A doctor he interviewed at Gaza City's Shifa Hospital said that there were

between 600 and 700 casualties, “most of them youths between the ages of 16 and 17 who were recruited by Hamas and sent to the slaughter.” (Ibid)

Cresmonesi’s article, unfortunately, is just a drop in the sea of the rabid anti-Israel propaganda that flooded the Media and was propagated by such organizations as the United Nations during the conflict. A majority of popular opinion has already absorbed the poison, and this little blip on the radar screen of reality will go unnoticed by most of the world. The propaganda that Israel slaughters innocents has then been reprinted and rebroadcast again and again from New York to London to Stockholm. It’s already a foregone conclusion that the Arab world eats, drinks, and breathes anti-Israel and anti-Semitic propaganda (Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* is a best-seller in the Arab world). Anyone who readily consumes it in effect supports Hamas in its tactics: using its own people as cannon fodder. If there ever was a war crime, I think that would be one. Cresmonesi’s article also details the fact that local humanitarian organizations in Gaza documented at least twenty instances of Hamas execution, torture, and kidnapping of anyone who opposes their regime or whom they suspect to be Israel collaborators during the three weeks of the war alone (Ibid). The ultimate victims here, of course, are the ordinary Palestinians. They are manipulated, controlled, and oppressed by a radical regime and then sold short by the international community that buys into the claim that all the Palestinian suffering is due to Israel’s aggression alone and has nothing to do with perhaps Palestinian leadership.

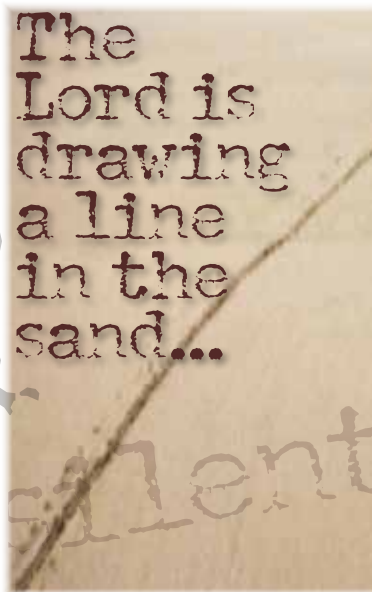
CUP OF DRUNKENNESS OR A SPIRIT OF SOBRIETY

“Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all the peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all the nations of the earth are gathered against it.” ~Zechariah 12:2

There has been a steady stream of vaguely veiled and blatant anti-Semitic rhetoric coming out of Europe dressed in its up-to-date costume of Israel bashing. The Left in America has also chimed in. The Europeans are calling us, the Jews in Israel, Nazis. In January of this year, an Irish Member of Parliament called an Irish Jewish legislator and Israel’s ambassador to Ireland “Goebbels”. How many anti-Israel protest signs in Europe did we see during the war with Hamas with the image of the Star of David equaling a Swastika? Countless political cartoons in Europe have depicted Israeli leaders as Nazi war criminals. What the Europeans are saying is, “You Jews in Israel are the real Nazis, not us.” They willingly blind themselves to the facts and allow themselves to be drunk on an ancient spirit of hatred against the Jewish people that has found new expression in our day and age. This is something that should have all of

our attention.

Israelis have resigned themselves to the fact that the world hates them. Usually most European leaders understand the facts on the ground in Israel better than the average media consumer in their countries, as was the case in this latest war with Hamas in Gaza. Europe’s leaders made moderate statements, and even Arab leaders held their tongues to an extent. However, if world leaders decide to turn against Israel, the whole of their populations will be right with them, if not leading the charge. The Lord is drawing a line in the sand and, in the days to come, we will all have to come down on one side or the other, either for Israel or against Israel.



I know most of us tend to think that the worst is behind us, WWII is behind us. If we believe the Bible at face value, if we believe in the Messiah’s return, we must also believe that “the great and terrible day of the Lord”, “Jacob’s Trouble”, the worst day in human history is ahead of us, not behind us (Jeremiah 30:7, Joel 2). That is sobering. I believe the Lord is calling us to two things right now:

being lovers of Yeshua *and* lovers of the truth. If He is truly our first love, He will share with us His abundant love for the nations *and* for the “least of these of [His] brethren”, the Jews (Matthew 25:31-45). If we are undone by experiencing the greatest love the world has ever known, the love of Yeshua, if



Israeli soldier in Gaza.

we are rooted and grounded in that love, we will not fall away or be shaken, no matter what comes along. Through that love, we will be devoted to Him and His Word, not trying to bend it to fit one theology or another. I believe the Lord was looking right at the Church in World War II: “What will they do when my People are delivered to the slaughter?” Except for a few, the Church was silent. The days are coming when it will be extremely unpopular or perhaps even dangerous to stand up for Israel or your Jewish neighbors. It is our fervent prayer and belief that, this time around, the body of Messiah will stand up and say, “I will not be silent!”

Nir Am Dove

We have spent the last few days in a constant state of stress and chaos. I cannot even describe the amount of phone calls my dad has received, the pressure on the whole family and the amount of fights we have had.

There were four rockets that fell in the kibbutz today. The last Qasam fell inside the pool. When I was walking in the path to the pool, I found out there was only one injury - a bird, a dove. A dove is supposed to symbolize peace and calm. She was bleeding from her head, probably from shrapnel that hit her or from the shock.

A sight like that gives me feelings of anger and hatred, and helps me understand the situation we live in today.

Some might say, 'It's only a dove', but in my opinion it is a deliberate message. Hamas acknowledges our existence, but does everything in its power to hurt us. I found myself in a situation where I was crying over a cute dove. What did she do to anyone? Nothing!

I am mad when in the news they say the 'Negev' and not 'Nir Am' or 'Sapir College'. [These are specific communities in southern Israel]

I yell towards Gaza to stop, that we have had enough! But as if someone really hears. I feel frustrated, confused, scared, weak, pain, anger... just a turmoil of feelings that never pass. Because we have so many drills, I feel like the Olympic champion in runs to escape Qasams. My reaction to hearing 'Tzeva Adom' [the air raid siren, which literally means 'Red Color'] is unnatural, and you cannot describe it in words.

I do not think anyone ever felt like that.

The only one that watches over me now is G-d, but I do not know for how long He will be able to watch over all of us.

While I am writing you this letter, I am running almost every five minutes to the hall, because I do not have a secure reinforced area.

I am using this opportunity to officially invite all of the Israeli government to come and sleep in Kibbutz Nir Am so they can have a little taste of what I am experiencing each day.

In spite of everything I will not stop, and I am still hoping for the best.

Eden Liberman
Age 13



Kibbutz Nir Am

“Life is shadowed by the fear of the rockets. Even though less than 20 people have died from rocket attacks, it’s the stress of waiting for the next alarm: ‘When will it come? Where will it fall?’ It is a psychological terror, not so much a physical one.”

- Ofer,
Kibbutz Nir Am resident

“Every time a rocket falls, it does something to your soul”

- Danah,
Kibbutz Nir Am resident

For the residents of Kibbutz Nir Am, an Israeli farming community bordering the Gaza Strip, this is reality. We at Hope for Israel could not sit back and do nothing. Inquiring about what the residents needed most in the midst of the turmoil, we discovered that there was no place for the community at large to meet securely. So, we renovated and secured a community center that can withstand rocket attacks. What this means for the community



Secure Community Center in Nir Am.



The elderly in the Nir Am Community Center.

is that they now have a safe place to convene together, to fellowship, to support each other, and to have a place to take their minds off the constant threat of attack, if even for a few moments. What we didn’t anticipate was that it would become the main heart of the community during this past war with Hamas, as well as a “war room” where the heads of the kibbutz would meet to determine steps to take to keep the residents safe. This is how we are bringing hope to these people, extending His hand of mercy to bless them.

Discerning the Times... *Continued from page 1*

He has given us through His Word, not pick and choose what makes us most comfortable or fits with the particular theology we were taught. Part of that ‘package’ is deciding where we stand on Israel as God’s covenant people. It can be a contentious issue, but it’s not one we can ignore or hope will go away. Until the day of His return, let us have a sober mind to discern the times and the seasons and stand for Him and the fullness of His truth!

Moran



This plaque is at the entrance to the Nir Am Community Center. It reads, “This Community Center was renovated and made secure with the help of Hope For Israel, with love for the elderly and the members of Nir Am.”

Final Word

In order to accomplish the great work the Lord has for us, we do need your prayer and financial support.

Please prayerfully consider supporting the Hope for Israel ministry.

Please make all checks payable to Hope for Israel.