

outreach

WILL ISRAEL SURVIVE?

The Newsletter of the Churches of God, UK

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The United States and to some extent Britain stand alone in their refusal to condemn the State of Israel for its attacks on Lebanon. Is such support acceptable? Or to be condemned by every 'good Christian'?

It's widely accepted that Hizbullah - 'the Party of God' - initiated the confrontation. [There are a variety of spellings of Hizbullah!] And no-one can condemn an internationally constituted State - as is Israel - for a robust defence of its borders and the obligation to protect its citizens.

This pseudo-religious 'Party' is dedicated, as is Hamas in Gaza, to the extermination of Israel. Their philosophy of war inculcated from childhood - encourages them to specifically target unarmed civilians. They themselves nestle among the general Lebanese population with the result that many 'innocents' are killed or maimed in the ensuing effort to end the aggression . Because there is a high proportion of children it is inevitable many of them suffer. And many of the men are absent in the front line - not really 'civilians'. Besides, many of the claims of 'atrocious' by Israel - as at Qano - are false.

Israel's response has therefore inevitably resulted - though not specifically targeted - in many civilian deaths. The powerful attacks on the Lebanese infrastructure is justified by the Israelis. The Lebanese Government has supinely failed to control Hizbullah, which is in effect a terrorist state within the state. The destruction of bridges and transport arteries is designed to stop the flow of arms and military personnel from Hizbullah's support base in Syria and Iran, both of which nations ardently deny the complete destruction of Israel.

But despite the massive Israeli onslaught their reputation for short, sharp - and victorious - wars has been tarnished.

Curiously, only limited progress appears to have been made. Many Israelis are questioning the competence of the military command and of their own Government. We must ask, though, could there be another reason?

Has God Forsaken Israel?

We could expect Israel, of all nations, to have a 'spiritual' side. Born from slavery in Egypt they covenanted with the LORD to be a '*light to the nations*'. They agreed to obey Him in return for

His special care - other peoples having shown themselves incapable of assuming this responsibility. God's conditions are summed up in the Ten Commandments.

The surprise return of the Jewish people to the land of Palestine - with United Nations defined boundaries (including that between Israel and Lebanon) - coupled with their speed and prowess in battle have until now set them apart. The LORD has seemingly been with them to give victory. Many Israelis are now asking, Has He deserted us?

The fact is, the Israelis are failing to perform their side of the covenant. Though by no means worse than other nations yet they shoulder greater responsibility for their behaviour. Notice Isaiah: *'Speak lovingly to the heart of Jerusalem; yea, cry to her that her warfare is done, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has taken from the hand of Jehovah double for all her sins' (ch 40:2).*

Cause for Concern

Take a look at Israel today. Contrary to the principles of the covenant the leadership turns a blind eye to serious sin. - and *'the people love to have it so'*.

Trafficking in sex is a huge business in Israel, with young women garnered from around the world and literally sold as slaves to pimps for exploitation.

Whatever your view on sexual orientation, *homosexuality* is contrary to Israel's covenant with the LORD. Yet her Government is actively promoting Israel - especially Tel Aviv - as a rival to San Francisco as the world's 'gay' capital.

A further affront to God is the tacit state-funded official approval in Israel of *abortion on demand*. Israel's ancestors were chastised for sacrificing their young children to the pagan demonic spirit Moloch.

In matters spiritual, the Israelis are besotted

with *'new age' philosophies*, abandoning the true faith. *'For thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because they are filled with customs from the east, and are sooth-sayers like the Philistines, and they strike hands with the children of foreigners'* (Isaiah 2:6).

Sabbath, too, and *God's festivals*, are neglected with a large percentage of the populace preferring the beach to the synagogue on Saturday.

God's Firstfruits

Israel is unique. She is God's 'firstborn' (Exodus 4:22). She is God's 'firstfruits', and as such anyone who meddles with her is in deep trouble: *'Israel is the LORD'S hallowed portion, His first-fruits of the increase; all that devour him shall be held guilty, evil shall come upon them, says the LORD'* (Jeremiah 2:3).

In the past, the LORD has used Gentile nations as a 'rod of correction' for Israel's sin. Assyria is called 'the rod of My anger':

'Ho Assyrian, the rod of my anger, the staff in whose hand is my indignation! I will send him against a profane nation, and against the people of my wrath [ie Israel] will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he means not so, neither does his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few'
(Isaiah 10:5-7)

Babylon [modern Iraq], too, overran Judah and exiled them from the Land for seventy years. Babylon, however, used savage means in their conquest, and God warned: *'... it shall be, when seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, and the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, says Jehovah; and I will make it everlasting ruins'* (Jeremiah 25:12).

Final Solution

Israel's period of 'warfare' is not yet complete'. Unless the nation turns back to God-

prescribed behaviour, it will indeed *receive double for all her sins*. Like a good father, God promised to correct His nation of Israel when she strayed from His perfect Law.

Some perceptive citizens in Israel consider the lack of a swift and clear and decisive victory over Hizbullah as a sign of God withdrawing His patronage, that He is chastising them.

The State of Israel is at a cross-roads. As God's model nation they will always be under attack. But, while it is obliged - as is every nation - to defend itself, yet the solution to its challenges is essentially spiritual. National *tshuva* - repentance -- is the sole final solution.

The Scriptures foresee a time when Israel will indeed return to God. It will be when the nation returns to the Land from a yet future dispersal - led by their LORD, then known to them as Jesus their Messiah, and in company with the remnant of their sister nations from the 'lost' Ten Tribes:

Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the uttermost parts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travails with child together: a great company shall they return hither. They shall come with weeping; and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by rivers of waters, in a straight way wherein they shall not stumble; for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born. Hear the word of Jehovah, O you nations, and declare it in the isles afar off; and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd does his flock. For Jehovah has ransomed Jacob, and redeemed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he. And they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow unto the goodness of Jehovah, to the grain, and to the new wine, and to the oil, and to the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all.

Jeremiah 31:10-12

Israel, of course, is not alone in its sinful

confrontation with the LORD. Sin there is matched - perhaps surpassed - by sin in Britain, in the United States, and indeed in every nation. The answer is everywhere the same - *repentance*.

Trouble Ahead

In the meantime the Israelis face formidable foes. Hizbullah claim to have 13,000 rockets but have used fewer than a quarter of them. That's even if no more are smuggled in from Iran or Syria. They face a hostile world press which is perhaps intent on playing down the clear threat from militant Islam. It faces a hostile United Nations, suspecting them of abetting the terrorists in southern Lebanon.

The Scriptures predict dark days ahead for Israel. Together with her allies trouble is coming : '*...for then shall be great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be*' (Matthew 24:21). It is described as '*the time of Jacob's trouble*' (Jeremiah 30:7).

Current events in the Middle East - in Israel, Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran - may be simply a harbinger of these prophesied future events. Or, it may indeed be '*the beginning of sorrows*' (Matthew 24:8) - the 'birth pains' of a new era.

Israel and her joined-at-the-hip allies in the United States and Britain are on the slippery slope of corruption. Unless we turn around, the predicted hand of divine correction will surely fall on us. However, as in ancient Nineveh (read Jonah's experience) *if* our leaders turn to the Creator and *if* our people turn to Him - then *the future can change*.

As individuals we can each make the necessary personal change that ensures we will experience the Saviour's care - no matter what the future may hold. Ω

Who are Israel's sister nations? Read the free article: *The Two Houses of Israel* also request: *What Do You Mean - 'Repent'?*