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Will Israel and Iran Go to War?

Romans 11:25-26: (NASB) ²⁵*For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; ²⁶and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob.*

Guest Host: David Stein



Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's anti-Semitic and anti-Israel views surely position him and the country of Iran among the foremost threats to the state of Israel. With war drums beating in the Middle East, thoughtful students of Bible prophecy wonder how the Bible's predictions of end-time events will play out. Scripture does indeed speak loudly and in detail about the near future for Israel, its neighbors, and the whole world as we approach the revelation of Christ and the inauguration of the kingdom of God on earth. Through the smoke of war and conflict of war on the horizon will come an era of peace and security for ALL mankind such as the world has never known. How will the current enemies of Israel be converted into friends? We will explore this today!

What is the current situation between Israel and Iran today?

 Israel will disappear from the map, *Iran's President Ahmadinejad, Associated Press (2008)*

- *Taking aim once again at Israel and the United States, Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, repeated inflammatory comments that he made three years ago, saying Israel would soon disappear. Ahmadinejad first made the remarks in 2005, fueling international outrage and speculation that he was threatening the Jewish state with a nuclear weapon. But while speaking at a ceremony honoring the late founder of Iran's Islamic Republic, Ahmadinejad told an audience, "This origin of corruption will soon be wiped off the earth's face." Ahmadinejad also called the U.S. a satanic power that with God's will would be annihilated.*

So this is the rhetoric from Iran's President in 2008! Would you feel threatened by such language if you lived in Israel?

The fact is that Iran is refining uranium, the key element for an atomic bomb. It requires a lot of technology to pass through the three stages of refinement to get material pure enough for a bomb. But the world community is watching them do this.

 Iran's uranium program, *Benjamin Netanyahu, United Nations speech (2012)*

- *Iran has to go through three stages. The first stage, they have to enrich enough low-enriched uranium. The second stage they have to enrich enough medium-enriched uranium. And the third stage and final stage, they have to enrich enough high-enriched uranium for the first bomb. Where's Iran? Now they are well into the second stage, and by next spring at most by next summer, at current enrichment rates, they will have finished the medium enrichment and move onto the final stage. From there, it is only a few months, possibly a few weeks, before they get enough enriched uranium for the first bomb.*

So Israel has drawn a "red line" past which they will take action. And political observers recognize how close we are to a possible war.

 Was possible this year, *Richard Engle, Meet the Press (January 2013)*

- *Just to start you out on the huge threat of an Iranian nuclear weapon, how does that factor into the second term?*
- *Well, I think it's possible that this year there may be an action by Israel against Iran. It looked likely last year. I thought it was going to happen and then it looked less likely, and people I'm speaking to think once again it is a possibility.*

And if that weren't enough, there is instability in the whole area of the Middle East threatening massive anarchy with Egypt on one side and Israel and Syria on another.

 Anarchy in whole area, *Richard Engle, Meet the Press*

- *If you look at it broadened out a little bit, then you have Syria, which is in a state of collapse and is probably going to be in some sort of state of anarchy in the next few months. That will likely spread to conflict in neighboring Lebanon and also spread to conflict in Iraq. We could have a potential band of conflict from Lebanon, through Syria into Iraq.*

We made the case for an extremely explosive situation in the Middle East. We see great turmoil in all of the neighbors around Israel, and all of these nations have made no secret of their

hatred of Israel. We have historic precedent for war against Israel - they have attacked Israel several times. So what's next? Let's take a step back for a moment and establish a scriptural foundation for the position of Israel before God today.

Why is Israel important? There are many Scriptures showing God still has things in mind for Israel: Romans 11:1-2 Ezekiel 43:7: God clearly knows how disobedient Israel has been through the ages. Normally we think disobedience would mean rejection, but God says He will dwell in their midst forever. God always keeps His promises. **Why would God direct them since they don't believe in Jesus?** But from a Christian standpoint, isn't it true that the Jews do not believe in Jesus Christ? Shouldn't that unbelief be held against them? Romans 11:25-29: God has *temporarily* permitted blindness. But because of God's love and promises to Israel's forefathers, they still have a place in God's plan. So has God done anything for them in modern times? In 1948 when Israel declared independence, the next day they were attacked by twelve nations simultaneously. Here's what their armaments consisted of: one cannon and seven tanks. And they won! And did you know that West Point Military Academy will not study the battles of Israel because they claim the outcomes are too improbable? **Has Bible prophecy already been fulfilled for Israel?** Jeremiah 30:3,10,11: This is an "end time" prophecy, given at the time Babylon came against Israel. Israel was evacuated and brought to Babylon. They came back, but did they "possess" the land in the sense of having it? No, not at that time. They were vassals to other kings, and it continued through Medo-Persia then Rome, then displaced again in 70 AD and the decades that followed. For centuries they were not in the land, but now they possess it. Promises to Israel according to the flesh are tied up in the LAND! We believe there is one call to follow Jesus. The fact that God has a different program in mind for the Jews is in fact a different program. Certainly in the New Testament, Paul did not direct people back to Israel; he just acknowledged that God had something better for those that would follow Jesus. Amos 9:11,14,15: This is a "forever" text. It did not apply when they were pulled out by Babylon or Rome, but they are there today and it applies now. Jeremiah 16:16: Hunters and fishers? When we got to the 20th century and it was time for favor to begin to return to Israel, it was God's will that the people came back to the land of promise. Many of them were comfortable where they were. This was true even back in the 6th century BC when they were in Babylon. They built lives and businesses and generally did not move.

- *Fishers* = Zionist movement to gather Jews back to their land. Jewish preachers back to the 19th century began to recognize the relevancy of prophecies and to tell their people that they needed to go back to the land of promise. This was enticing them, just like a fisherman would put a worm on a hook.
- *Hunters* = Persecutors who showed the Jews they had no true homeland other than Israel. This was an incentive to "move home."
 - o Russian pogroms (Wikipedia: a pogrom is a violent mob attack generally against the Jews, and often condoned by the forces of law, characterized by killings and/or destruction of homes and properties, business and religious centers.)
 - o Nazi Holocaust ("whole burnt offering")

This Jeremiah text could be misunderstood to say that God is responsible for a lot of the bad things that have happened to the Jewish people. The way we understand it is that God allowed certain circumstances that He could have overruled but that He allowed to happen for a greater purpose.

Hosea 2:15: A little history:

- The Jews were not allowed to own land in the area of Palestine for centuries after the Romans evicted them. The law forbade selling of land to a Jew.
- Turkey (with help from Great Britain) made political arrangements to open land for sale to the Jews. In 1878, a group of Jews bought land and established the first Jewish kibbutz called, "Petah Tikvah."
- This settlement was built on land the Jews bought from the local inhabitants. And it wasn't great land - it included malaria-laden marshes and barren deserts. But the Jews developed the land and the "desert blossomed." (Isaiah 35:1) Israel is one of the largest exporters of food and flowers in that whole area.

- Hebrew was resurrected! This is the first time a “dead” language has been brought back and used by a whole nation.

- It is interesting that 70 years later, Israel attained nationhood. “70 years” is often used in Scripture as a period of judgment or preparation.

Zechariah 12:6: Here we have another direct connection with history. When Israel won their independence in 1948, they did not win Jerusalem, which continued in Arab hands. It was not until the 1967 War (the 6 Day War) where Israel had a decisive victory over their opponents and regained Jerusalem, immediately declaring as the capital of Israel. So in 1967, **Zechariah 12:6** was finally fulfilled. How thrilling! It is another confirmation that God knows what is going on, and He keeps His promises!

What’s next for Israel according to the Bible? Disclaimer: We are students of the Bible, not prophets. We cannot be dogmatic on what will happen next, but we study the prophecies carefully and try to put them together as best we can. This is our suggested order, or flow. We will be comparing two future battles described in **Psalms 83** and **Ezekiel 38**. **Psalms 83:1-5:** Have you heard this before? These first four verses are today’s headlines! The Iranian President Ahmadinajad says these literal words regularly. These verses summarize the hatred of Israel’s neighbors for the Jews. (Listeners will also want to review **Psalms 2**, which also has an end time application. You will find some of the language very similar.)

In the next verse we have the list of enemies: **Psalms 83:6-7:** These are all Semitic nations, who are descendants of Shem, like Israel. One could say they are Israel’s “cousins.” What about Iran? Iran, while a Muslim country, is not Semitic but Aryan. (Wikipedia definition of Aryan: Self designation of the Indo-Iranian languages and their speakers.)

Where were these tribes geographically located in ancient times?

- 1. Edom - Southwest Jordan
- 2. Ishmaelites - Southern Jordan
- 3. Moab - Jordan, east of Israel (Moab was a son of Lot.)
- 4. Hagarenes - Lived east of Israel; Jordan, possibly including modern Damascus
- 5. Gebel - still today in modern Lebanon to the north; also called Byblos
- 6. Ammon - Jordan; Ahman, the modern spelling of Ammon, is the capital of Jordan. (While the government of Jordan has a peace treaty with Israel, we should remember that some 70% of Jordan’s population is “Palestinian” and in fact the country was originally formed to be the Palestinian home land.) (Ammon was another son of Lot.)
- 7. Amalek - South of Israel, Sinai area; the Amalekites lived in Israel’s southern desert and Philistia settled in Gaza on Israel’s southern border.
- 8. Philistines - Gaza (Hamas)
- 9. Tyre - still today in modern Lebanon (Hezbollah)

We know this cannot be a historical reference since this confederacy of enemies and coordinated attack on Israel has never happened in the past! This is why we feel it is appropriate to apply to modern times. They currently are banded together with the goal of eliminating Israel.

So here we have all of Israel’s next door neighbors, all of them sworn to Israel’s destruction, and all of them being whipped into a frenzy by Syria and Iran. Incidentally, notice who is missing from this list? PERSIA → IRAN!! **Psalms 83:8:** (KJV) *Assur also is joined with them: they have holpen the children of Lot. Selah.*

Assur is a reference to Assyria, one of the great world powers after Egypt and before Babylon. They are the descendants of Japheth. (Shem, Ham and Japheth were the three sons of Noah.) Assur was an Aryan nation, not a Semitic one. In this Scripture, they aren’t doing the attacking but are instead providing assistance by joining with them. Assyria here, as the only non-Semitic nation, would seem to refer to some nation or nations north of Israel who are helping Israel’s enemies, militarily and in other ways. This certainly describes Russia which is north of the region and could also include Iran to the Northwest which had been equipping Hezbollah through Syria. (Both Russia and Iran are Aryan nations.) So we think that all of this is what is going on in preparation for this coming war.

 **A nuclear Iran threat to the world and United States**

- *Have you ever considered the implications of a nuclear Iran?*
- *Secretary of State Hillary Clinton: A nuclear armed Iran is going to spark an arms race in the Middle East and the greater region.*
- *Kenneth Timmerman, Executive Director, Foundation for Democracy in Iran: Whenever Iran has developed a new weapon that can be used against Israel, they have shipped it to Hezbollah. Now those missiles give Iran, through Hezbollah, the capability of hitting any target in Israel.*
- *Walid Phares, Author, The Coming Revolution: Once the Iranian missiles are up and running on launching pads in Lebanon, they can reach not just Israel, they can reach western targets.*
- *Timmerman: The Iranians carried out a test to launch a scud missile from a barge in the Caspian Sea. Many people believe this is what the Iranians would like to do to the United States - put a missile in a cargo ship going off on our coast.*

The irrational hatred of the Western non-Islamic way of life is palpable, and we believe comes from Satan. **What will be the result of this conflict?** Psalms 83:9-18: In all of these battles that Israel had with specific enemies, what happened to the Midianites? To Sisera? To Jabin? If you go back and look at the events involved with each of these given here, you find in every case Israel wins an overwhelming victory. There was a total and complete military loss for these enemies, and they never again threatened Israel. We know Israel has had several battles with their surrounding enemies, but we believe there will be at least one more and the threat will be eliminated entirely. But notice that last part: *That men may know that thou, whose name alone is Jehovah.* To know something, one has to be alive. *That they may seek Thy name* - these are the enemies! God's interest is in ALL mankind, not just in taking the blindness away from Israel. Really, all mankind is blind. They will recognize the great God Jehovah.

Psalms 83 results in the removal of the Arab threat, bringing about a condition of relative peace and security in Israel. Ezekiel 38:8,11,14: So prior to the attack of Ezekiel 38, Israel is dwelling in safety, or at least in relative safety. The previous threat has been removed, but there is another one brewing...Ezekiel 38:2-6: This group of attackers is interested in something that Israel has. Remember, in Psalms 83, the enemy was all comprised of Semitic nations surrounding Israel. It is interesting that none of *these* nations are Semitic. They are all located a further distance from Israel:

1. Persia - Iran
2. Ethiopia - Sudan (Cush or Ethiopia of ancient times)
3. Libya - modern day Libya
4. Gomer - Ancient Cimmerians - northeast Turkey
5. Togarmah of the north quarters - eastern Turkey
6. *and many people with thee* - a mixed company from elsewhere

Gog - the etymology is unclear; but we see it is a malevolent, sinister force. We associate it with Satan or all of those aligned on the side of Satan.

Magog - those countries under control of demonic forces. A people to the north of Israel, possibly northern Iraq.

Meshech - A land to the north - some associate with Moscow, although this is not warranted linguistically.

Tubal - Another land to the north - some associate with Tobolsk in Russia, which is linguistically consistent.

Some Christians believe Russia will be involved and they point to the Hebrew word "Rosh." In the King James Version, this is "*the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal.*" These countries to the north are coming to take a spoil. Is there a lack of it where they are? What is that spoil? As we get closer and closer to Armageddon, Israel will be a bastion of relative peace and security. They have great natural resources and are very productive. Perhaps the minerals in the Dead Sea would be one of those resources? **Now what happens? This is the final battle, also known as Armageddon:** Ezekiel 38:7-14

A word on the "observer nations:"

1. Sheba - Saudi Arabia (who probably has the least antagonistic view towards Israel)
2. Dedan - Saudi Arabia
3. (merchants of) Tarshish - Spain, which was way out the farthest west at that time → Western Powers (including the United States, in an economic, political or military situation that they cannot help Israel.)



These nations are speaking to Gog. These nations will not take part in the attack or take a spoil, but they are aware of what is happening and will rather lamely protest it. They do not come to Israel's aid. So how does the attack go? At the end of Ezekiel 38, we find that God fights for Israel and the aggressor nations are defeated. (verses 18-23) But there are other prophecies that give us a microscope and show there is a lot more that happens, including that it appears Israel loses the first attack. Zechariah 14:1-3: *...the city shall be taken* - We are expecting a loss for Israel in the opening of this battle. Why would God permit this opening loss? *the residue* - usually translated "remnant," as in remnant of faith. We see a separation work going on, so that a pure and cleansed people would be left unto God. Zephaniah 3:11-13



Observations:

1. There was a class of shameful transgressors in Israel;
2. They are removed by God;
3. A faithful remnant is left who trust in God; and
4. God works with them.

It is an exact parallel to Zechariah 14! Zechariah 12:9-10: Timing? = in the day that all nations come against Jerusalem!

- *spirit of supplications* = the grace to know what to ask for...their Messiah. They will know to pray through Jesus at that time.

Micah 5:5-9:

- *when the Assyrian shall come into our land* = metaphor for all these enemies that come against Israel from the north
- *seven shepherds* = recognition of Jesus and the glorified church from heaven as their saviors and deliverers
- *eight princes of men* = the resurrection of the ancient forefathers of Israel - Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David and other of the heroes of the past that will be raised at that time to fight for Israel.

So here is our scriptural basis for our interpretation of the eight princes of men:

Isaiah 1:25-27:

- *the dross* = the Jews without faith who are removed
- *counselors/judges* = those heroes of Israel delivered the people in the past. (See Hebrews 11 for the list!)

Isaiah 66:19-20:

- those that escape from the attacking armies who go back to their homelands and testify of the establishment of God's Kingdom in Israel!
- the nations respond by sending the rest of the Jews back to Israel as a peace offering

Isaiah 49:22: The Great Exodus now expands the boundaries to their scriptural designations: Genesis 15:18 Deuteronomy 1:7,8 Deuteronomy 11:24 Exodus 23:31 **The further response of the world:** Zechariah 8:23: God's intention is to save the whole world, starting with Israel. As the world recognizes these miraculous things taking place in Israel, blessings will start to migrate out to the rest of the world. The enemies that came into the land that survived will go back as witnesses to what happened. Isaiah 44:5 Isaiah 60:5: All of those blinded will receive a blessing as well. The sea is often used as a symbol for the restless masses of mankind. This "sea class" will be converted and will love God and will come to an understanding. It is what the whole kingdom is all about - reconciliation of the world to God. After all: John 3:16: *God so loved THE WORLD...* **How long before these things occur?** We have already seen that prophecy is in the process of fulfillment. And so it continues. We don't know how quickly things will happen, but looking at the situation in the Middle East now seems to indicate not very long. The next development will be a final war between Israel and their Arab neighbor. So we recommend that all who love God and His plan to **WATCH ISRAEL!**

**So will Iran and Israel go to war?
For Jonathan and Rick (and David!) and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!**