



Light of Messiah Ministries

...Bringing Jesus to the Jewish People

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Israel and the Middle East In Conflict

We have begun the year with war escalating in the Middle East. Hamas mortar shells from Gaza have been showering down on Israel for years. Now Israel has retaliated, invading Gaza from both the air and by land. **The world's attention has turned to Israel.** Nations of the world have gathered together to discuss how peace can be attained. The United Nations Security Council has convened and asked Israel to cease their aggression against the Palestinians as rockets from Gaza continue to rain down on southern Israel. **Israel is under attack. Gaza is under siege. The world watches.**



The Creation Of The Conflict

Fighting in the Middle East and Israel is nothing new. It has raged for millennia. The Bible is full of stories of Israel sparring with their neighbors. **It is something we are all familiar with because the struggle that we are witnessing is not a modern conflict but an ancient conflict rooted in biblical history.** It did not begin in 1948 with the establishment of the modern state of Israel. Or in 1967 after Israel was attacked by its neighbors and gained control over Gaza, the West Bank, and Jerusalem. It did not begin in 1971 when Israel was attacked on the Day of Atonement.

The current conflict began thousands of years ago. It is not a struggle that can or will be solved through geopolitical means. **And yet we all watch and wait for peace, for a cease fire, for the killing to stop, for a solution to the problem.**

So how did the conflict begin? How did it continue? And where is it going? Let me give my brief and simple perspective in this limited space.

The conflict in the Middle East began with the birth of two brothers, Ishmael and Isaac. Ishmael was born as a result of the union between Abraham and Hagar. **Their union, illegitimate as it was, produced a son. A special son.** A son who God said He would bless and make "as numerous as the stars." **But Ishmael was also described as a man whose life would be characterized by conflict.** It was prophesized he would be a "wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand will be against him, and he will live in hostility toward all of his brothers." *Gen 16:12*

Isaac was born, as promised by God, to Sarah and Abraham. **He was the promised son.** The son who God told Sarah and Abraham they would have, even in their old age. **Isaac was the son through whom God promised to bring His blessings to the world.** Ultimately God's greatest blessing to the world came to us through the descendants of Isaac, in the person of Jesus.

The people we know today as the Pal-

estinians, Muslims, and Arabs, claim ancestry back to Ishmael. The Jewish people claim ancestry back to Isaac. **Two brothers, one Land, one City.** The conflict begins.

The Continuation Of The Conflict

Throughout biblical history conflict raged between the Israel and the surrounding nations. The Babylonians, Ammonites, Moabites, Canaanites, and Philistines (to name a few), lived in and around Israel and Judah. **The surrounding nations had their sights set on the destruction of Israel and the annihilation of the people of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.** The Jewish people targeted for destruction. Jerusalem targeted for take over.

In Nehemiah chapter 2 we read a very interesting passage about opposition to the Israelites plan to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. **After having been called by God to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and committing their hearts to the process Nehemiah and the Israelites were met with antagonism.** We read:

"But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard about it they mocked and ridiculed us, "What is this you are doing are you rebelling against the king?" Nehemiah answered them by saying, "The God of heaven will give us success...but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim, or historic right to it." Neh. 2:19-20

The battle raged over a land, and more specifically, a city.

Just as the battle raged throughout biblical history over the land of Israel and

the city of Jerusalem, so the battle continues today. **It is no secret that the stated goal of Hamas is the destruction of Israel, the annihilation of the Jewish people, and the take over of Jerusalem.** The conflict in Israel continues.

The Culmination Of The Conflict

At some point in the future the conflict will come to an end. God gives us a picture of that culmination in the prophets when He addresses the nations surrounding Israel. In Zephaniah chapter 2 we read that all of the nations surrounding Israel will be destroyed because they “mocked and ridiculed the people of God.”

“I have heard the insults of Moab and the taunts of the Ammonites, who insulted my people and made threats against their land...” Zeph. 2:8

“Gaza will be abandoned and Ashkelon left in ruins. At midday Ashdod will be emptied and Ekron uprooted. Woe to you who live by the sea, the word of the Lord is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines. I will destroy you and none will be left.” Zeph. 2:5

“This is what they will get in return for their pride, for insulting and mocking the people of the Lord God Almighty.” Zeph. 2:10

The conflict we are witnessing today is leading to another battle. A battle in which all the nations of the earth will gather against Israel. **At some point in the future the world will conclude that its greatest problem is the existence of Israel.** They will conclude that if it were not for Israel we would have peace. **The world will decide, Israel has to go.**

“This is the word of the Lord concerning Israel, The Lord, who stretches out the heavens, who lays the foundation of the earth, and who forms the spirit of man within him declares: I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that sends all the surrounding peoples reeling. Judah will be besieged as well as Jerusalem. On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against



her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves...” Zech. 12:1-3

One day Israel will be surrounded. The world will think they are bringing peace. The “United Nations” will think they have it won. **But God has other plans.** On that day Jesus will return to establish His Kingdom. On that day the nations of the earth will see the Kingdom of God. **On that day the one who wept over Jerusalem, and left from Jerusalem, will return to Jerusalem.**

“And I will pour out on the house of David and the Inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the One they have pierced, and they will mourn as one mourns for an only child...” Zech 12:10

Jesus, the only One who can bring true and lasting peace, will return. My people need to hear. My people need to see. **My people need to know.**

Please pray for us as we continue to bring the Prince of Peace back to the people who He loved so much.

How to Contact Us

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****A special note:** The content for this prayer letter is adapted from my message, **“Israel and the Middle East in Conflict”**. You may access more information about this message on our web site.

Messianic Passover Banquet 2009

We are excited about our upcoming 2009 Light of Messiah Ministries Passover Banquet. Our ministry banquet is one of the highlights of our year. This year our banquet will again be held at the **Atlanta Marriott Alpharetta at Windward Parkway on Friday night, March 27th, beginning at 6:30pm.** We are expecting a great turnout. **Reservations must be in by March 20th.** You may use the enclosed order form or make your reservations online.

Please mark your calendars and plan to join us for a wonderful traditional dinner, fellowship, and worship, as we remember Jesus’ last meal and God’s faithfulness to Israel.

Bring your friends, Sunday school class, small groups, and church. Your Jewish friends are welcome too!

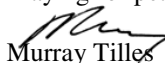
Thank You!

Though war rages in Israel we know that God is sovereign over history. We know that He will use the current strife to draw people to Himself and open hearts to His truth. **And as the war rages we are diligently bringing the Good News of Messiah Jesus to the Jewish people.**

We are looking forward to a great year in 2009.

Thank you for standing with us in our efforts to reach Jewish people with the message of Jesus. Your prayers and financial support help make our ministry possible.

Praying for peace,


 Murray Tilley
 Light of Messiah Ministries