



ISRAEL'S MILITARY CAMPAIGN

Pillar of a Cloud

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Thoughts During Israel's Military Campaign - Pillar of a Cloud

One of the challenges that every student of the Bible has is to think from G-d's perspective rather than that of human reason. As society both here in Israel and throughout the world moves further away from knowing Scripture, it is not surprising that the instructions of the Bible are perceived as unreasonable and even lacking sanity. Before it is possible to proceed, it must be stated that the G-d of Israel does not rejoice with the death of His creation, but life is not the central objective of one who fears G-d.

I do not worship life; rather I worship the living G-d. There are numerous examples in the Scriptures when one saw death as preferable to living under certain conditions. Throughout Jewish history there have been numerous martyrs who gladly chose death, rather than confessing a heretical statement or denying Yeshua. In other words, obedience to the L-rd is of a higher worth than simply living. When I think about the numerous veterans both in the United States and here in Israel, who gave willingly of their lives for the freedom that we enjoy today, this point is truly underscored.

When one examines the Scripture, he finds that the Biblical G-d is not a pacifist; rather He has frequently called His people to kill. When the Children of Israel came to the Promise Land the Bible states,

"For you shall come near to a city to make war against it, you shall call out to it for peace."
Deuteronomy 20:10

The verse makes it clear that it is not the will of G-d for these people to be killed. Yet if the inhabitants of that city (or nation) do not respond properly, that is assisting the Children of Israel in their call to possess the Land, one reads,

"And if it (the city) does not make peace with you, and makes with you war, you shall lay siege against it." Deuteronomy 20:12

It is clear from the continuation of the passage that it is the L-rd's will for Israel to slay the men of that city (See verse 13). The women and children are to be spared. Please notice that the word "war" appears several times in this passage. For most of human history, men behaved like men and would go forth, leaving their wives and children at home and fight. Today men in general have become cowards in many different aspects. They flee from their responsibilities as husbands and fathers and fail to behave in the manner that they should. This is certainly true among those who take part in terrorism.

In this brief article, the current conflict between Hamas and Israel will be evaluated in order to present a Biblical framework for Israel's behavior during this conflict.

On November 14, 2012, Israel made a decision to assassinate the head of the military wing of Hamas, Ahmed Jabari. This man had a great deal of blood on his hands, taking part in terrorism that led to several Israeli citizens being killed. Many people who rely on mainstream media believe that this act gave rise to the current conflict between Israel and Hamas. In reality, Israel took this action as a response to the increase in the number of rocket attacks that took place in

the weeks prior to the assassination. It was clear to all that after the assassination the number of rockets would greatly increase, and it is for this reason that Israel announced the military campaign "Pillar of a Cloud".

The main purpose of this article is to offer a Biblical approach on how Israel can achieve her objectives for setting out on this campaign. Prime Minister Netanyahu stated that Israel had modest objectives. The first was to stop the rockets from being fired by Hamas (and other terrorist groups), and the second was to provide a "longer-term" solution that Hamas would not return to firing rockets in a few weeks or months. The third and final objective was to destroy the stockpile of rockets that the terrorist organizations in Gaza currently possess.

The last few days I have spent several hours listening to a variety of Israeli politicians and military analysts offer their positions on the conflict. Whether these individuals are on the right or left side of the political spectrum one thing is has become very obvious, their assessment and recommendations will not bring about a victory for Israel. The reason for this is that each of them has accepted a political correctness to waging war. Those on the left believe a solution can only be achieved through diplomatic means. They stress the need for Israel to sit down and talk to Hamas. Putting aside the appropriateness of speaking to terrorists and the legitimacy such talks will provide to them, the fact of the matter is that there is no framework for discussions.

Hamas believes that Tel Aviv is an "occupied" city and needs to be liberated. In fact, Hamas does not recognize Israel's right to exist at all. For them, all of the Land is "Palestine" and no Jewish individual should be allowed to live in the Land. In regard to a cease fire, a Hamas spokesman said that it was Israel who broke the cease fire agreement by killing Jabari. When asked about the hundreds of rockets that have been fired into Israel by Hamas and other terrorist organizations in Gaza since the end of the military conflict "Cast Lead", he said that liberating "Palestine" demands such actions. Hence, Hamas views their rocket attacks as a necessary part of meeting their objectives, and believes any response by Israel is a violation to a cease fire. In other words, Israel must accept the rocket attacks as a consequence of the existence of a Jewish State.

Once again, there is simply not a sound voice on the other side with whom to speak. Hamas requirements for a "temporary" ceasing of firing rockets into Israel are three-fold. One, that the border crossings between Egypt and Gaza must be opened up and controlled by Hamas. Two, that the embargo against Gaza must end and three Israel must stop their attacks. So let's understand what Hamas is saying. They want total freedom to bring into Gaza unchecked, both by land and by sea, whatever they deem appropriate. Without the right to do this, Hamas and the Palestinians in general, feel Israel is disrespecting and humiliating them. I wonder what things they might want to import, seeing that their primary objective is the destruction of the Jewish State and its citizens.

Others, who are also on the left side politically, agree that Hamas and other major organizations in Gaza are not of the mindset whereby it is possible to negotiate with them. Their recommendation is to strengthen Abu Mazan and assist him in gaining control over Gaza in addition to his leadership over (the "West Bank") Judea and Samaria. The problem is that Abu Mazan and the Palestinian Authority he leads has joined forces with Hamas. In regard to talking to Abu Mazan, his pre-conditions for talks concerning a peace agreement between the Palestinians and Israel is a return to the pre-1967 borders. Such a condition is unacceptable to

Israel, primarily because those borders are not defensible. I hope one is seeing a common denominator among both Abu Mazan and the other terrorists; this common denominator is that the Palestinians want Israel to make concessions which put Israel's national security at great risk. Why would this be? The answer is that when the Palestinians call for liberation, freedom, human rights, and dignity; really it is nothing more than an attempt to place them in a position where they are better able to destroy the Jewish State.

When one considers the right side of the political spectrum there is also a willingness to talk to Hamas, but through a third party. In this way the right can uphold their policy of not negotiating with terrorists, but does a third-party really make a difference? If past history is the measure that one uses, then the answer is clearly no! Israel has made numerous concessions in the past, and has received nothing for them. In fact, the Palestinians have failed to keep their part of the agreement and the third party negotiators do not hold them accountable. Others on the right point to two other actions that Israel can take in order to fulfill their objectives. The first is deterrence. This policy is to make the firing of rockets so unpleasant to Hamas and other terror groups, by a harsh response to each launch of rockets, that Hamas comes to the conclusion that it is not worthwhile to fire rockets.

If Hamas and other terrorists still choose to fire rockets, a harsher military response must be enacted or the second action could be implemented. This has a much higher cost both financially, socially, and in regard to human life. This goal involves Israel going into the Gaza Strip and leaving an armed force, perhaps even resettling some Israeli citizens there. This proposition has little support, but would provide a long term solution to the firing of rockets. Of course such an action presents several other problems.

The purpose of this article is not to simply discuss the situation in Gaza, but to illustrate by means of this conflict several important decisions that one must accept if terrorism is going to be successfully defeated. It is most significant that the "accepted" rules of war today must be reexamined and many must be set aside. The reason for this is that terrorists violate these rules and entities like the United Nations allow them to because they are not a recognized government. In fact, the UN cannot, after several years of discussions, even define what terrorism is. Let's look at a few of the rules of warfare that must be reevaluated.

The goal of war: The purpose of warfare is to defeat the enemy. War should of course be waged as a last resort, that is after negotiations and diplomatic means have failed. But once the decision has been made, there must be a complete effort to achieve victory. A swift victory when possible. I hope that this first rule is not controversial. However, when conflicts break out, the first thing the UN, European Union, and the United States state is that the response must be proportional.

A Proportional Response: The very nature of this principle goes against the primary objective of war. A proportional response will only serve to lengthen the conflict and, often times, cause more people to lose their lives and be injured. This is what those who espouse a proportional response are trying to avoid. What should be done when possible is to respond in a vastly disproportional manner which will deter the behavior, which gave rise to the conflict, from happening again or will cause an outright surrender.

Avoid Civilian Casualties: Obviously no one wants civilians to be harmed in any way; however one must acknowledge that many of the conflicts are not with recognized governments or with well identified armies. Terrorists, for example, often do not wear military uniforms and instead of fighting in battle fields located away from civilian populations, choose to utilize civilian

populations as a strategy of their warfare. Since this issue is so central to our discussion, it needs to be developed in greater detail.

Terrorists utilize civilians in many different ways. First, they appear as normal civilians as to make it harder to identify and locate them. They strike and slip into the civilian population. This is not only to avoid detection, but also to use civilians as a shield against the attacks by their enemies. Instead of storing their weapons away from the civilian population and waging their attacks from a field of battle, they purposely carry out their attacks in populated areas, believing that their enemies will not or cannot retaliate due to the risk of injuring or killing a civilian.

Although such actions by those who wish to respond to terrorists are rooted in compassion, it actually prolongs the conflict and leads to a greater amount of pain, suffering, and deaths. Or, the objectives against the terrorists are unable to be fulfilled and the conflict continues. If civilian casualties were not given such a high priority and attacks were waged against the terrorists in spite of these risks, who should be held responsible? If the terrorist organizations were blamed for the "collateral damage" perhaps the citizens of the locations where the terrorists are given safe haven would reconsider their support or indifference to them.

In returning to the Gaza conflict, one needs to remember that the residents of the Gaza Strip voted Hamas into power. Hence, they hold a degree of accountability. Certainly no reasonable minded individual is pleased when children and other individuals are harmed in these reprisals against terrorists, but again, failure to take such action results in the conflict continuing for a much longer period of time.

Diplomacy above the Military: Today, it is more common to have diplomats prepare military actions, rather than generals. More consideration is given to how the military actions are going to be viewed by the world, rather than whether the plans are going to lead to victory.

Islam is a Religion: When examining a large number of the military conflicts in the world, there is something present within most of them— Islam.

The Islam which is based in the Koran, and is manifested by Sh'ria law, is not a religion. Rather, it is a political philosophy which uses some religious elements to unite and rule over populations. It condones and commands violence against those who do not accept Islam, and it devalues life in general. As long as Islam is politically correct and viewed as one of the great religions of the world, Islam will be allowed to spread its control over an ever increasing amount of individuals who will find their freedom and liberty taken away and their economic standards lessened. Islam demands the individual to make sacrifices for the good of Islam. Whereas most individuals will see their quality of life significantly lowered by Islam, for those in leadership or friends of leaders, their economic standards soar. Until the West wakes up and sees Islam for what it truly is, the world will continue to see an ever growing part of the map fall under Islamic rule. This is what the Arab Spring is all about. Those who viewed the changes in the Arab world as an indication of a yearning for democracy are sadly mistaken.

Conclusions

Israel must crush the terrorist organizations in Gaza and Judea and Samaria. As Israel mulls over a land campaign into the Gaza Strip, perhaps a much more severe air campaign would accomplish their short-term objectives. At the time of the writing of this article, the Israeli Air Force had carried out 1,350 strikes on Gaza. Less than 100 individuals in Gaza had been killed by these strikes. This means that it takes 13 attacks before 1 person is killed. This clearly shows Israel is not attacking people, but weapon caches and other targets to interrupt Hamas' and other terrorist groups' ability to launch rockets. However, although the number of rockets has

lessened, still 150 rockets were shot from Gaza into Israel on day 6 of the campaign. Of the 100 people who have been killed, approximately half according to most sources are in fact terrorists. Although Israel should continue to attack such targets, they should not use such surgical strikes. For example, one attack destroyed the generator of a Hamas leader, rather than his entire home. This was Israel's intent for the strike. Hamas and other terrorists interpret as weakness, lacking the necessary fortitude for winning this conflict.

Israel should greatly reduce the number of attacks, but increase the power of each attack. I realize the following statement will sound callous, but had Israel only made 20-30 strikes, and 2,000 to 10,000 individuals had been killed by these much larger and powerful strikes, Hamas may quickly reevaluate their actions. If terrorists know that each rocket launched into Israel will be met with retaliation by Israel which would result in hundreds if not a few thousand deaths in Gaza, perhaps then other leaders will emerge who truly care about the well being of those they represent. Through reasonable actions on the side of the Palestinians, Israel (both the left and the right) would be willing to assist the Arab population within Israel to enjoy a better quality of life from every aspect.

However, as long as a two State solution is the accepted course for obtaining peace, the vast majority of Arabs living in Israel will not learn to accept the reality of a Jewish State. Remember that the creation of Jordan was the original attempt at a two State solution, and the result was war(s). If instead of weakening Israel and reducing her land, Israel's right to exist was strengthened as well as her military capabilities, then the Arab world would have to accept the reality that there is a Jewish State in the Middle East. Furthermore, if there were sanctioning by the world community of those nations that refused to recognize Israel and who have no diplomatic relationship with Israel, then perhaps over time the Arab world would come to terms with the existence of Israel. However, as long as the UN for example provides a platform for Iran and other nations to speak and spread their anti-Semitic views, Israel must pay less attention to public opinion, political correctness and the views of other nations and carry out actions in their best interest.

Most hearing such a perspective immediately state how Israel cannot survive without support from the international community. Perhaps Israel can and should learn a lesson from Islamists. They show no regard for the views of the international community and behave in a barbaric manner against their citizens, yet for the most part the world is relatively quiet. I am not saying that Israel should behave like the Muslims, but only a strong course of military action which severely punishes terrorists and exerts a heavy price on the community at large will bring about a resolution. Before dismissing such a view, visit Europe. Several years ago I was in Frankfurt, Germany. At a shop I saw a rack of postcards. One caught my eye. It was a picture of a civilian neighborhood shortly before World War Two. In fact I learned from the owner of the store that it was a picture of the very neighborhood in which I was standing. On the back of the postcard was a picture of the same neighborhood after the war. It had been leveled by Allied forces. Not as a result of an errant bomb, rather it was targeted like many other neighborhoods and cities in Germany and Italy. It was strikes like these which brought about victory. Sad, tragic, and disgusting, but this is war. Failure to understand this and act accordingly results in defeat, stalemate, or simply a short respite until the next conflict.

Some will point out that the Arab world is large and Israel is a tiny nation. This is true, but I prefer to think quite differently. I say Allah is nothing, and the G-d of Israel is sovereign. By the way, I have read the book of Revelation and I feel absolutely sure in my last statement.