

Some Comments on Netanyahu's Election in Israel: A Prelude to Coming Disaster?

by Art Katz

Art Katz believes that Netanyahu's election is a sign of Israel's humanly insoluble situation and that its salvation cannot be expected from any political quarter.

Scripture: Isaiah 6:11-12, Isaiah 49:14-26, Isaiah 51:11, Jeremiah 30:7, Jeremiah 31:13, Ezekiel 36:33-38, Joel 2:26-27, Amos 9:13-15, Zechariah 14:1-4, Matthew 24:15-22

Topics: "Prophecy", "Israel's Redemption"

Description

Art Katz discusses the implications of Benjamin Netanyahu's election in Israel, suggesting that it may not lead to any significant change in the nation's dire circumstances. He argues that the Oslo agreements have already conceded too much ground to Israel's enemies, and any attempts to reverse this could escalate violence. Katz emphasizes that Israel's salvation cannot be found in political solutions but rather in a return to God, warning that a time of great distress, referred to as 'the time of Jacob's trouble,' is imminent. He calls for the Church to recognize the prophetic responsibility to warn of impending disaster and to prepare spiritually for the challenges ahead. Ultimately, Katz believes that true redemption for Israel will come only after a period of suffering and trial.

Transcript

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While the upset victory of Benjamin Netanyahu may astonish, shock or delight one faction or another, what significance can it hold in effecting any real change in Israel's perilous situation? Sufficient ground has already been conceded to Israel's intractable enemies through the conditions of the Oslo agreements as to make them irreversible. In fact, any attempt now to offset them or even delay the 'peace process' by a more conservative and wary prime minister and cabinet might actually more quickly precipitate the inevitable violence.

Netanyahu's already-announced intention of pursuing terrorists into the safe haven provided by territories under the sovereignty of the Palestinian Authority, will inevitably bring about an armed clash with the 30,000 'police' that constitute a formidable military presence within Israel's own borders. Even without that, the Palestinian leadership might conclude that only violence, the resumption of a threatened and extended Intifada or worse, is the only answer for the obtainment of the goals of statehood and the possession of Jerusalem that failed negotiations cannot now be expected to deliver.

A front page article in the Jerusalem Post International Edition (June 15, 1996) cites Palestinian Authority ministers as warning that "any policy statement by the incoming government denying a Palestinian state, refusing a Palestinian role in Jerusalem, or rejecting withdrawal from the Golan would be considered a declaration of war." It may be that the Lord's intention in allowing the coming to power of the Likud is to demonstrate to the nation that its salvation cannot be expected from any political quarter, that its situation is humanly insoluble, that the nation's predicament is the logic of its own sin and that of its fathers, the ultimate consequence of turning from its own God, and that its only remedy lies exclusively and equally in its return!

That such a return cannot Biblically be expected before a final time of terror and despair [called 'The time of Jacob's trouble' (Jer. 30:7) that must necessarily take place in the Land, and culminate in the Lord's return (Zech.14)] is made abundantly clear from numerous prophetic Old and New Testament texts. Yet that there are segments of the Church that continue, despite that word, to hope for political resolution with an intractable enemy resolutely bent upon Israel's destruction, is a statement of a condition that perhaps borders upon willful deception (and if in that, what then in anything?).

So even now, are events not building toward a dread and final crisis which is still future in present Israel's experience and for which the time of Jacob's trouble may itself be the conclusion? Indeed, the crisis grows out of desperate secular-humanistic schemings for 'peace' that must inevitably fail, and will likely precipitate a preliminary violence of such a kind as to usher in the antichrist treaty leading to the final calamity of Jacob's trouble itself! Were the present state of Israel that 'Israel' now, the nation would be seeking God at its own authentic altar of worship, and displaying that limp of utter dependency toward God (Gen. 32:24-32; 33:19-20) that distinguishes a 'Jacob' from an 'Israel.'

This is exactly what will characterize the nation millennially after its final distress in order that it might 'bless all the families of the earth' in contrast to that Jacob confidence in itself that is the tragic and present disposition of the nation. That 'Peniel' is yet to be crossed but is impending. To see present Israel romantically as anything other than a 'Jacob' is simply not to see. Such a projection is more the statement of our own unrealistic spiritual condition that may itself be rudely remedied in nothing less than the shock of unexpected disaster.

That Israel's long-standing hardness as a nation (though individuals as a remnant of grace continue to be saved) will not be altered till then is itself a judgment ordained of God: Then said I, Lord how long [will Israel remain in this condition] and He answered, "Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, and the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land." (Isa. 6: 11-12).

Though there have been previous and partial fulfillments in Israel's history of defeat and expulsion, a full and final fulfillment is yet future as the text itself indicates. Clearly, the 'heart of this people is [remains] fat and their ears heavy and their eyes shut' evidently waiting for the 'until' of a devastation of 'great forsaking

in the midst of the land.' This then requires a presence in the Land (in my opinion obtained in the establishment of the state of Israel since 1948) 'and it shall be a tenth, and it shall return' (v. 13) - not necessarily a literal tenth, but a tithe which is expressive of, and stands for, the entire nation.

Our mistake, and indeed, tragic in its implications, is to interpret that preliminary presence [i.e., present political Israel] as constituting already the redeemed nation rather than the necessary remnant that 'shall be eaten' 1 [Isa.6:13, i.e., 'given, up to destruction' or as it is rendered in the NIV, 'again be laid waste']. Were this the only text indicating a future devastation in the Land before a final restoration, we could perhaps be excused for refusing to consider so painful a scenario.

But the truth is that there is a plenitude of prophecies that speak of a final return to a land made desolate. Consider this text from Ez.36:33-38: Thus says the Lord God; in the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded and the desolate land shall be tilled...and they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced and inhabited...

That this, in my opinion, does not refer to the cities of antiquity but present Haifa, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and all the cities of contemporary Israel, is shown by the reference that follows. In it God is revealed in His intervention indicating a time that is clearly future: Then the heathen that are left round about you [suggesting a regional disaster of probably a nuclear kind] shall know that I the Lord build the ruined places and plant that that was desolate... That this violence concludes with Israel's millennial blessings indicates a transformed people who at last come to know their God, is stated in the concluding verse of the text: As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men: and they shall know that I am the Lord (See also Joel 2:26-27).

For confirmation elsewhere in the prophetic Scriptures, consider Amos 9:13-15, "And I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel, and they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them..." Isa. 44:26; 49:19 reiterate the same, 'For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away' (cp. Isa.64:4, etc.). Is it not this to which Jesus Himself refers (Matt. 24:15-22) in describing the 'sign of [His] Coming and of the end of the world'?

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet [Dan. 9:26-27], stand in the holy place...then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no nor ever shall be and except those days be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: Is Jesus not echoing the alarm of Jeremiah 30:7, Daniel 12:1, and Joel 2:2? 'Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it'...

'And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that time'... 'There has never been anything like it, nor will there be again after it...' If that is the description of the time of the Nazi Holocaust now past, how do we explain what follows in v.10 'and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid'? Is this not exactly opposite to Israel's present apprehensive condition and plight? One that will not likely be relieved until after the prophesied devastation comes?

That this was not the consequence of Israel's previous disasters is evident from the still-unchanged condition of ourselves as a people. To assure Israel that it has come when it is yet future, and indeed impending, is to leave her wholly unprepared for both the suddenness and extent of the catastrophe. To

warn of its imminence is to encourage as many, as will, into the Ark of Safety which the knowledge of the Messiah and Deliverer in Himself provides. It is to make practical physical preparations for refuge and flight in anticipation of a disaster, which when it comes, will come suddenly.

Remarkably, certain 'friends' of Israel, antagonistic to this account, assert that to hold this view is to "place an unwarranted curse on the nation and its people"! Indeed, as lovers of Israel, but also of God's word, we are faced with a hard choice that we must not evade. Even as a Jew, who desires the best for my own people, I must stand for the evident truth of God's word no matter how offensive. 'For thus saith the Lord, we have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace' (Jer. 30:5).

No summary of this end time scenario, however brief, should omit some references of the prolific testimony found in the prophet Isaiah. In chapters 49-51 we find continual reference to the 'desolate heritages' to 'those who are bound' 'who are in darkness,' His afflicted. Zion is understandably disconsolate, 'the Lord has forsaken me' (49:14), nevertheless His assurance to her is 'Your destroyers and devastators will depart from you' (17)...those who swallowed you will be far away' (19), 'who made you barren, an exile and a wanderer' (21), and the prey of the tyrant will be rescued...'and I will contend with the one who contends with you (25), 'and all flesh will know that I, the Lord, am your savior, and Four redeemer, the mighty one of Jacob' (26) - never before the result of a divine deliverance!

See the judgment to be visited upon Egypt and Edom 'because of the violence done to the sons of Judah in whose land they have shed innocent blood' (Joel 3:19; See also Jer. 30:11,16.). 'But Judah will be inhabited forever, and Jerusalem for all generations' (v.20) indicates that what is spoken here is future. Does this 'all flesh will know' then correspond to any previous deliverance? Could it not be more clear than what is being described here is a statement of Israel's (Jacob's) future experience?

The note of contemporary Islamic spite and spirit of vengeance leaps up at us from Isa.51:23 'Bow down that we may go over: and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over.' 'Now therefore, what have I here, saith the Lord, 'that my people is taken away for naught? They that rule over them make them to howl'...(52:5). 'Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore they shall know in that day that I am He that doth speak: behold it is I' (52:6).

The eschatological refrain, 'in that day,' repeats itself in Jer.30:8 'in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will break off his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers will no more serve themselves of him: but they shall serve the Lord their God, and David [Jesus] their King, whom I will raise up unto them' (vs.8-9). How can these words be strained to refer to the Holocaust of the Nazi time, or to any previous disaster in the history of Israel?

That 'Moab' and 'Ammon' (present day Jordan) is to be made as desolate as Sodom and Gomorra - 'a perpetual desolation' for their excessive brutality and taunting (Zeph.2:9-11), takes place at the close of the age when 'I will avenge their blood which I have not avenged, for the Lord [now millennially, theocratically] dwells in Zion' (Joel 3:20-21). In the light of these Scriptures, and that only a small sampling, is it not a false comfort to encourage Israel to believe now for an ultimate security, in the Land?

Do we not as the Church, have a prophetic responsibility to sound a warning of impending disaster that would otherwise leave the unsuspecting (both Christian and Jew) devastated? Should it not impel us to that active gospel witness in Israel, which we have been loath to make? Is this not a mercy of love that might move to jealousy those who will undoubtedly at the first be indignant in the hearing? Have we not reason to fear the judgment of Ez.33:1-17 for being watchmen on the wall who fail to sound the warning?

To believe for a progressive improvement of present Israel's character is a humanistic presumption, predicated upon premises contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture. It forfeits the necessary apocalyptic dealing of God with the nation that is alone calculated to reveal Him to their joy. Such a view is cross-avoiding, it prefers what is gradual and evolutionary rather than violent and apocalyptic, humanly improvable rather than divinely supernatural; it shrinks from the necessity of a suffering and trial in a final distress for which His Coming is their deliverance and our glorification.

For only, Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning unto joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow (Jer. 31:13). Then 'the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away' (Isa. 51:11). A Church that shrinks from such an apocalyptic view makes itself a candidate for apostasy when the disillusionment and disappointment of unexpected calamity falls.

The crisis of Israel is, therefore, among other things, God's provision to wake the Church from its own escapist sleep and unpreparedness; to compel it to a return to the apostolic consciousness of the suffering that precedes the glory that makes the church the Church. And finally, to a cross-centered lifestyle in the present, intrinsic to the faith and called for in these Last Days! Saying 'yes' to God's view releases Him for that necessary, preparatory work in us by which we are alone fitted to be 'saviors' for the people Israel in their final extremity.

Of this final and future capstone of Israel's redemptive history, the renowned Hebrew-Christian scholar, David Baron writes,² When once this great but godly sorrow shall have accomplished its blessed end in working a repentance never to be repented of, He shall pour His consolations into their broken hearts, and give unto them the "oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. "...The ultimate literal fulfillment of it lies yet in the future, in the day for which we watch and pray, when our Lord Jesus shall, according to His promise, appear in His glory, and the Jewish nation shall literally look upon Him whom they have pierced and be, as it were, "born in a day."

May we have the patience to wait that day and the courage to bear what must precede it. | The translation from the Hebraist F.C. Jennings in his Studies in Isaiah, Loizeaux Brothers, p.70. 2 Commentary on Zechariah, Kregel Publications, p.454.

Source:

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