

Israel –‘Like A Rolling Stone’ In The Latter Days

The nation of Israel is in shock. The Jewish citizens of Israel are in a spiritual state of post-traumatic stress disorder. The past thirteen years of life-threatening events – false peace processes, horrendous terror attacks, and low-intensity urban war – have rained down like body blows on us. The result is a national numbness, a lackadaisical attitude. Many Israelis are half-hearted and afraid to hope. The coming elections are greeted with cynicism and lack of enthusiasm. Few believe that there are chances for real peace between the Muslim/Arab world and the Jewish people. Terrorism has not succeeded in destroying the Jewish state, but its cumulative effects have eroded a clear national vision.

In August 1965 Bob Dylan released his classic song “*Like A Rolling Stone*”. The chorus insistently repeats, “How does it feel to be on your own, with no direction home?” This question could be asked of Israel today. Many recent events in Israel have created a sense of purposelessness and no clear direction. One of these events is Prime Minister Sharon’s total reversal of his original election platform (by which he had won a landslide victory) and his abandonment of long held strategic military perspectives. A US parallel would be if President Ronald Reagan had publicly embraced communism and then had left the Republican Party to join Ralph Nader, while insisting on remaining in office as Commander-in-Chief!

Other recent shocks include Sharon’s forcing through the traumatic disengagement from Gaza and Northern Samaria without public debate or referendum – an event with serious strategic consequences for Israel; the intensification of the Islamic *jihadi* terror campaign after the withdrawal from Gaza; Iran's nuclear preparations to attack Israel, and the Iranian president's Holocaust denial and vows to destroy Israel. The water pot in which the Israeli frog is swimming is definitely getting hotter, to paraphrase Mark Twain’s memorable adage.

Two famous Israeli leaders, David Ben-Gurion and Menahem Begin, would be turning in their graves if they could only hear what many Israeli politicians are currently suggesting. Two of the three main parties running in the upcoming elections are advocating more unconditional withdrawals, including a re-division of Jerusalem – while admitting that the Arabs in Judea and Samaria are continuing to support and perpetrate terrorism. A recent poll showed 49% of Israelis supporting the division of Jerusalem, while 49% are opposed to this step.

What has caused such a radical collapse of the national will? Why are some basic, mainstay Zionist convictions crumbling like tea biscuits in hot liquid? As Bob Dylan once commented regarding last days events, “Trees that’ve stood for a thousand years suddenly will fall” (“Man of Peace”, © 1983 Special Rider Music).

Musical Chairs in the Knesset

PM Sharon (who just hours ago experienced a minor stroke) recently parachuted out of his own Likud Party and founded a new one called ‘Kadima’ (Hebrew for ‘forward!’). Other top Likud politicians followed him, abandoning decades-long party affiliation. Six of these aspiring ministers have criminal charges pending against them. One even orchestrated events so that his ship-jumping occurred on the very same day when the Attorney General recommended bringing criminal charges against him.

Two weeks ago one candidate for the Likud chairmanship, the present Minister of Defense Shaul Mofaz attacked Sharon’s Kadima policies and sent out 128,000 letters to Likud voters affirming his own commitment to stay with the Likud no matter what. A few days later, as his party faithful were opening his letter in their mail, he changed political horses in mid-stream, bolting to Sharon’s new party. Kadima spinmeisters then leaked gossip to the Israeli press that Mofaz would now be punished for having attacked Sharon the week before – if Sharon wins the election he will not be given the portfolio of the Defense Ministry! (Note a similar dynamic in 1 Ki.1:7, 49). In today’s Israeli political world, long-time party loyalties are cynically jettisoned and clear public commitments are casually switched.

A report on Israel Radio this morning indicated that PM Sharon’s son Omri, chief hatchet-man for Kadima and recently convicted of money-laundering charges, is pressuring Likud acquaintances still in the Likud hierarchy to act as a fifth column within the Likud movement and vote against Benyamin Netanyahu – in order to help Kadima weaken and squash the Likud in the coming elections!

Other such shenanigans characterize all the other major parties, and Israelis are reacting with cynicism, disbelief and anger. A new bumper sticker declares in blue and white Israeli colors, "Politicians, I hate you!" A Holocaust survivor in our community who spent over three years in Auschwitz told us a few days ago that all of the politicians currently campaigning are prostitutes. These words bring to mind the words of the prophet Micah, whose description of ancient Israeli politics could well describe some of the present goings on.

What misery is mine! . . . The godly have been swept from the land; not one upright man remains. All men lie in wait to shed blood; each hunts his brother with a net. Both hands are skilled in doing evil: the ruler demands gifts, the judge accepts bribes, the powerful dictate what they desire – they all conspire together. The best of them is like a briar, the most upright worse than a thorn hedge . . . Now is the time of their confusion. Do not trust a neighbor; put no confidence in a friend. Even with her who lies in your embrace be careful of your words. For a son treats his father contemptuously, a daughter rises up against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law – a man's enemies are the members of his own household. (Micah 7:1-6)

Micah, however, sees his own corrupted situation through eyes of faith. He knows that God will redeem Israel from her less than righteous leaders and will put her military and political enemies to flight. **In our day, as in Micah's, we need to hang on, to intercede for God to fulfill His promises, and to take a stand for righteousness.**

But as for me, I watch expectantly for YHVH, I wait for God my Savior; my God will hear me. Do not gloat over me, my enemy! Though I have fallen, I will rise. Though I sit in darkness, YHVH will be my light. I will bear the indignation of YHVH because I have sinned against Him, until He pleads my case and executes justice for me. He will bring me out into the light; I will see His righteousness. . . The day for building your walls will come, the day for extending your boundaries. (Micah 7:7-9, 11)

The Hebrew Bulldozer

In the 1880's a 'bull-dose' was a new American phrase referring to a large and efficient dose of any sort of medicine or punishment. To 'bull-dose' someone meant giving him a severe dose of medicine, a whipping or coercion, or to intimidate at gunpoint. By 1886 a bulldozer referred to a large-caliber pistol or the person who wielded it. Eventually bulldozing came to mean to use force to overcome any obstacle. Today the most famous armored bulldozer is the Israel Defense Force's D-9, used for detonating explosive charges and demolishing terrorists' structures while absorbing enemy fire.

Israel's most *famous* bulldozer, however, is PM Arik Sharon. He is known throughout the world as 'the Bulldozer': "Bulldozer Sharon wins" (The Sunday Times August 21 2005); "The Bulldozer Flattens Likud" (Der Spiegel Nov 21 2005); "Israeli 'Bulldozer' Sharon smashes new path" (Reuters, Nov 21, 2005). Sharon's dogged determination to "do it my way" and accomplish his own strategies, whether military or political, are the stuff of legend as well as of much controversy in Israel. Years ago PM Begin once was quoted as saying that he would never allow Sharon to become Minister of Defense, "lest he surround my office with tanks!"

Sharon's bulldozing has led to Israeli military victories (anti-terrorist reprisal raids in the 1950's - 1970's; brilliant tank operations in the 1967 and 1973 wars) as well as to heated controversy (the Gidi and Mitla casualties; disobedience to orders when he felt his own strategy was better; issues related to the Sabra and Shatilla massacres, etc). In 1982 Sharon was accused of misleading Prime Minister Begin's entire cabinet about the military strategy and goals of Operation Peace for Galilee. Sharon's record is one of supreme self-confidence, dogged determination, excellent strategy and hiding his own hand of poker cards.

In this he is similar to an ancient Jewish Chief of Staff, Joab son of Zeruiah. King David owed many of his brilliant military victories to Joab. Yet at the same time he felt bullied by him and was horrified by some of his unrighteous machinations: "*And today, though I am the anointed king, I am weak, and these sons of Zeruiah are too strong for me. May YHVH repay the evildoer (ed., Joab) according to his evil deeds!*" (2 Sam.3:39; see also 1 Ki.2:1-6).

Sharon is a ruler who does what is right in his own eyes. He has learned to bring very few people into his confidence. The writer of Proverbs notes that "*all the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but YHVH weighs the spirits*" (Prov 16:2). And again he notes that "*every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but YHVH sifts the hearts. To do justice and*

judgment is more acceptable to YHVH than sacrifice. A high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin” (Prov 21:2-4).

It is strategically important to pray for Prime Minister Sharon (1 Tim.2:2-4). We will perhaps never fully understand the spiritual and political pressures he is dealing with (Eph.6:12). The demonic powers of wickedness in high places are trying to influence Sharon and to sway him with counterfeit counsel, even as Gríma Wormtongue (Saruman’s agent) tried to blind and weaken King Théoden of Rohan in J.R.R Tolkein’s The Two Towers. Pray that the God of the Armies of Israel will grant a liberating revelation to PM Sharon and show him the heart-strategies of the God of Jacob.

“ We have heard with our ears, O God; our fathers have told us what You did in their days, in days long ago. With Your hand You drove out the nations and planted our fathers; You crushed the peoples and made our fathers flourish. It was not by their sword that they won the land, nor did their arm bring them victory; it was Your right hand, Your arm, and the light of Your face, for You loved them. You are my King and my God, who decrees victories for Jacob. Through You we push back our enemies; through Your name we trample our foes. I do not trust in my bow, my sword does not bring me victory; but You give us victory over our enemies, You put our adversaries to shame. In God we make our boast all day long, and we will praise Your name forever. Selah” (Ps 44:1-8)

God’s perspective on ‘land for peace’ accords

Nearly 3,500 years ago YHVH spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai and severely warned him about cutting a covenant (entering into a treaty obligation) with any of the tribes then living in the land of Canaan. God’s perspective was that as long as these Canaanites were not spiritually submitted to the God of Israel, they would bring spiritual confusion and deception to the people of Israel. This would lead to a false peace, a counterfeit coexistence, to the breaking down of God’s walls of protection over Israel, and finally to military invasion of the land of Israel and exile for the Jewish people.

“Then God said, ‘Behold, I am going to make a covenant with you. Before all your people I will perform miracles never before done in all the earth nor among any of the nations.

All the people among whom you live will see the working of YHVH, for it is a fearful thing that I am going to perform with you. Obey what I command you today: behold, I am going to drive out the Amorite before you, and the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite. Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land into which you are going, or it will become a snare in your midst. But rather, you are to tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and cut down their Asherah poles. Do not worship any other god, for YHVH, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God. Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land'” (Exod 34:10-15)

Today's leaders of Israel for the most part do not shape their military and political strategies based on the Hebrew Scriptures. Today's 'kings' in Israel (the politicians) try to do what seems best to them in light of pressing circumstances and superpower pressures. Once again we find ourselves living in a time similar to the days of the Judges, when it was said with regret, *“In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes”* (Judg 17:6). ***Pray for Israel's leadership, that the God of Israel and His scriptural strategies will guide and encourage them in all the difficult and challenging decisions that need to be made.***

Hosea's Latter-Day nightmare

Hosea prophesied to the northern tribes of Israel during the mid-700's BC. He pleaded with them to turn back to the Living God, and declared that exile to Assyria would soon shake Israel to her foundations. He proclaimed that the Jewish people would go into a long exile, losing godly government (the Davidic kings) and holy worship (the Temple in Jerusalem) – even seeing the destruction of their false worship centers in Dan and Bethel. *“For the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar and without ephod or household idols”* (Hosea 3:4).

Nevertheless, Hosea held out a prophetic word of hope and vision. At the end of the age, when the Jewish people realize that all other possibilities of achieving godly government and holy worship in our own strength are exhausted, we will turn back to the Messianic Davidic dynasty, and will come with trembling repentance to YHVH our God: *“Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek YHVH their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to YHVH and to His goodness in the last days”* (Hosea 3:5).

What is happening right now in Israel is the tail end, the latter part of this process. The Jewish people's faith in the wisdom, courage, strength and honesty of their leaders is being severely shaken. This hurts, and it causes a sense of no direction, no purpose and no vision. As the writer of Proverbs once said (29:18), "*Without a prophetic vision, the people mourn as if at approaching death*" (my paraphrased translation).

But according to Hosea, this process is about to morph into the spiritual return of Israel to their God and their Davidic monarchy. ***Pray for the people of Israel, that God would turn our hearts back to Him. Pray that we would seek Him and Yeshua His Messiah, turning away from any arm of flesh – any dependence on any other country, including our own – and back to full dependence on YHVH alone.***

A Christmas Prayer

As debate rises in the USA about whether it is acceptable to wish people a 'Merry Christmas', we wish you a Merry Christmas, a blessed Messiahmas, and a Happy Hannukah for good measure! We also remember the prophetic blessing that Z'charya (Zechariah) spoke over his son Yochanan (John the Baptist) at his *brit milah* (Hebrew for circumcision). Zechariah thanked the God of Israel that, when the Messiah Son of David would come, then we Jewish people would be delivered from all our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. ***As we consider the amazing birth of Yeshua our Immanuel, let us pray together that the God of Israel would confound and frustrate all the enemies of the Jewish people, and that He would deliver us from their hands, their guns and bombs, and their weapons of mass destruction.*** Even so, come Lord Yeshua!

“His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, ‘Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the House of David His servant (as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from long ago) salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us; to show mercy toward our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant (the oath which He swore to Abraham our father); to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and

righteousness before Him all our days . . . to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace' ” (Luke 1:67-75).

In Messiah Yeshua, the Lord of Armies and the Prince of Peace,

Avner Boskey

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