

Israel: We Need to Pay Attention



by Rev. Dr. Bob Henley

My dog and I walked across the Sunrise Cay Bridge just as morning was breaking. A bank of dark gray clouds hung low over the water on the horizon. Wisps of white cirrus clouds and jet contrails laced the sky overhead. The tranquility was interrupted only by the quiet footfall of a jogger passing by.

As we walked, my mind went to another place where gray clouds hang low over the horizon. Wisps of contrails lace the sky. But these clouds are the dark clouds of war hanging low over Gaza. The contrails are from missiles launched in Gaza, raining down death and terror on cities and towns in Israel.

The border between Israel and Gaza has never been a place of tranquility. But what took place on Saturday, October 7th can only be compared with the genocidal acts of the Third Reich in the Holocaust. The barbarous acts carried out by Hamas terrorists on Jews for being Jews, were acts of pure evil.

To most of us, what took place seems inconceivable. That's why it is important to pay attention to the stated rationale that gave rise to these murderous actions.

Bruce Hoffman, writing in "The Atlantic," published an article titled, "Understanding Hamas's Genocidal Ideology: A Close Read of Hamas's Founding Documents." He summarized the 36 documents of the Hamas charter under four main points. They call for:

1. The complete destruction

of Israel as an essential condition for the liberation of Palestine and the establishment of a theocratic state based on Islamic law (Sharia),

2. The need for both unrestrained and unceasing holy war (jihad) to attain the above objective,

3. The deliberate disdain for, and dismissal of, any negotiated resolution or political settlement of Jewish and Muslim claims to the Holy Land, and

4. The reinforcement of historical anti-Semitic tropes and calumnies married to sinister conspiracy theories.

What took place on October 7th can only be understood considering the aims stated in the

Hamas charter. The horror inflicted that day was an intentional murderous act of jihad.

One of my close friends is an experienced Clinical Psychologist, with whom I had lunch regularly. He shared some of the terrible things he has dealt with in his practice. In reflection, he said to me, "If someone tells you they are going to kill you, pay attention!"

One person who knows Hamas is Mosab Hassan Yousef. He is the son of the founder of Hamas. He turned his back on his father's movement and became a spy for Israel. In his journey, he has become a follower of Jesus. We need to pay attention to what he says.

He told an interviewer, "I was born at the heart of Hamas leadership... and I know them very well. They don't care for the Palestinian people. They do not regard human life. I saw their brutality firsthand back in 1996 when I spent about a year and a half in Megiddo Prison... They killed so many Palestinian people at that point, and this is when I decided that I cannot be together with this movement."

Sincere people are protesting Israel's actions in Gaza. But there can be no moral equivalence between the evil perpetrated by Hamas terrorists on the Jewish people in the land, and Israel's legitimate right and duty to defend its nation and its people.

Most everyone is deeply troubled and deeply moved by these horrific events. The one thing we cannot do is be indifferent. We must now be resolutely willing to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Israel, our ally, and the only democratic government in the Middle East, against this malignant existential threat

I encourage you to use whatever influence you possess to speak on Israel's behalf in any way you can. I encourage you to support humanitarian relief efforts. To that end, we have coordinated with the Ocean Reef Community Foundation on creating the Israel Relief Fund (More information on how to take part can be found on page 4). I encourage you to pray.

We can pray for the victims of these atrocities – the families, loved ones and friends of those brutally slaughtered, and for the some 200 hostages being held

captive in Gaza.

We can pray for those tasked with the horrendous work of dealing with the physical and emotional aftermath of the atrocities.

We can pray for the success of the IDF as they seek to destroy the monsters of Hamas. We pray for the protection of all those who live in the God-given homeland of the Jewish people. We can pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

We can pray for the innocents who are caught up in the conflict – those Palestinians, Christians and Jews who hate what is taking place and who simply want to live their lives in peace.

Finally, we can pray for the coming of the only true and lasting hope for peace in the Middle East and in our world. That hope is found in Isaiah's vision of God's Messiah, who will someday "...judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore."

Every morning sunrise brings us one day closer to that day.

CHAPEL NEWS

Ocean Reef Chaplain
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305-367-2049
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FRIDAY, OCT. 27

AA Meeting
7:30 a.m., Chapel Board Room
Call 305-390-4983 for additional AA Meetings

SUNDAY, OCT. 29

In-person Summer Service
10 a.m., Chapel Fellowship Hall, Volunteer Led

Online Worship Service

11 a.m., visit orcchapel.org to watch Series by Rev. Dr. Bob Henley

MONDAY, OCT. 30

AI-Anon Meeting
9 a.m., Chapel Fellowship Hall

AA Meeting
7:30 p.m., Chapel Board Room
Call 305-390-4983 for additional AA Meetings

TUESDAY, OCT. 31

A Journey through the Bible: Teaching Series
10 a.m., Zoom - visit orcchapel.org for Zoom Link

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 1

Intercessory Prayer
8:30 a.m., Chapel Board Room