

From Our Pastor November 17, 2018

Sabbath Greetings to everyone!

This past week Some 460 rockets were fired from Gaza toward Israel. This was the largest rocket attack on Israel in the past decade. The Iron Dome missile defense system intercepted 100 of them. In response the military said it struck over 160 targets in Gaza. Most of the rockets exploded in vacant areas, but one killed a 48-year-old Palestinian man when a rocket fired from Gaza hit a building in the southern Israeli city of Ashkelon. Two women who were also in the building were seriously wounded. An Israeli bus that had been carrying 50 soldiers was also hit, but it was empty so there were no casualties.

Israelis expected a counter attack, and warplanes hit dozens of Hamas targets in Gaza in response, but the land attack never came. Instead, something unusual took place. Israel and the Palestinian factions in Gaza reached a cease-fire on Tuesday evening after three days of hostilities. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that a cease-fire was reached with Palestinian factions in Gaza, saying on Wednesday that "leadership is not doing the easy thing. Leadership is doing the right thing, even if it's difficult." Later in the week, speaking at a memorial for David Ben-Gurion in the Negev, Netanyahu said that Hamas "begged for a cease-fire, and they know very well why."

But many in Israel were angry over the agreement. Haaretz.com reported, "Hundreds of Israelis took the streets in the southern town of Sderot to protest the cease-fire. Several demonstrators blocked the road at the entrance to the city and burned tires; policemen who were at the scene confronted some of them." Some of the residents of towns and cities in southern Israel that regularly come under rocket fire want strong military action to stop the rockets. They live in daily fear of what might drop from the sky.

There is also political fallout. Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman announced his resignation on Wednesday and called for elections to be held. The coalition holding the government together may dissolve and force elections soon. Mr. Netanyahu may or may not head the next government. Mr. Lieberman warned, "There is no other definition, no other significance, but a capitulation to terror," he said, adding: "What we are doing now as a country is buying short-term quiet at the cost of our long-term security."

While Mr. Lieberman may be right, a case could be made that Israel has been buying short term peace at the cost of true security ever since the Yom Kippur war of 1973, but their choices have been few and grim with strong outside pressure every time.

Certainly the contention over Jerusalem and the surrounding area are a burden for the world. God predicted this through the prophet Zechariah over 2400 years ago. "It shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who

would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it."

All nations of the earth are not yet gathered against Jerusalem, but we should be aware that any war in that part of the world could quickly spread to involve other nations.

*Rex Sexton
Pastor, UCG Portland*