

From Our Pastor January 26, 2019

Sabbath Greetings to Everyone!

While most Americans are hearing about the cold civil war going on in Washington, DC, the Middle East is heating up. After recent Israeli air strikes on military installations in and around Damascus killed 12 Iranian soldiers and a number of Syrian and Hezbollah fighters, the Islamic Republic of Iran said it's itching like never before to annihilate the Jewish state.

Israeltoday.co.il reported, "We're ready for the decisive war that will bring about Israel's disappearance from the earth. Our young airmen are prepared for the day when Israel will be destroyed," the head of Iran's air force, Brig. Gen. Aziz Nasirzadeh, told an online Iranian news portal.

Hours after Nasirzadeh issued his threat, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu responded that Israel remained unfazed by Iranian threats and would continue to strike the Islamic Republic's military foothold in Syria. "Anyone who tries to hurt us, we will hurt them," Netanyahu said at the opening of a new airport in southern Israel.

The air strikes were in response to a missile attack last week. Making a bizarre picture, a missile fired from Syria went over the only ski area in Israel, on Mt. Hermon, and was recorded by several people. The fascinating and frightening video recorded two skiers skiing down a snowy slope in Israel while a defense rocket goes up in and intercepts an incoming missile. Living in a constant state of war tension, Israeli skiers took it as normal. Most people looked up to the sky in surprise, said Micki Inbar, the spokeswoman for the Mount Hermon site. A few took out their phones to film the white trail of smoke. Then they put their sunglasses back on and went back to sledding or making snowmen or skiing, she told the Times of Israel. The ski park was closed for a day, but 7,000 visitors came the next day, when the park reopened and on Wednesday, the site hosted almost 10,000 visitors, close to capacity. This winter has been one of the best in memory for snowfall on Mt. Hermon, so the skiers don't want to miss out just because someone is shooting missiles at them.

In the South, the Israeli military was gearing up Friday for renewed violence on the Gaza border, a day after Hamas rejected millions in Qatari aid money. Officials from the Hamas terror group made the surprise announcement that they would be rejecting \$15 million in aid money from Qatar Thursday, days after Israel temporarily froze the transfer as part of a tacit ceasefire deal.

The move stoked fears in Israel that Hamas, the de facto ruler in the Gaza Strip, could allow weekly protests along the border to become more violent after several weeks of relative calm, and could also renew rocket fire on Israeli towns. Israel fears that Hamas now has long range larger missiles that might be able to hit populated areas in Tel Aviv. In addition to the continual discovery of tunnels into Israeli held territory in the North and

in the South, developments this past week have increased the likelihood of a serious war outbreak. The US troops stationed in Syria were there not only to defeat Isis terrorists, but also served as a stabilizing force on Israel's northern border. With them leaving, Hezbollah might be more inclined to attack.

While most Israelis obviously feel very safe, some must identify with the prophet Jeremiah who was troubled by the sound of war coming. "O my soul, my soul! I am pained in my very heart! My heart makes a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, Because you have heard, O my soul, The sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war." (Jeremiah 4:19)

War in the Land of Israel is coming, but things are not falling apart as some would observe. In reality things are coming together as God has planned. He has a purpose and is allowing mankind to prove that we are not capable of governing ourselves. After a time of great destruction, suffering, and death, a new world will be formed out of the ashes. Jesus Christ admonished us to pray for that new world--His Kingdom--to come so that God's will can be done on earth as it is in heaven.

"For thus says the LORD: 'The whole land shall be desolate; Yet I will not make a full end. For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black, Because I have spoken. I have purposed and will not relent, Nor will I turn back from it.'" (Jeremiah 4: 27-28)

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