Israel and Palestine: A Family Vendetta

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On a quiet October day, October 7, 2023, during Shabat and celebration of Simchat Torah, the peace of Israel was destroyed by sudden bombings which had not been heard for over half a century. It was unexpected. No whispers of looming troubles, just a celebration. And a new war began. A vicious war. A war which seems to have no mercy. Hamas, a terrorist group whose hatred of Israel is well known, took advantage of the eyes of the people turned towards God (Shabat and holy celebration) and attacked.

Since that day much has been written, reported, commented upon. This war is reported with a bias towards Palestinian, and their casualties. Media seems to have forgotten that it was Hamas who broke the silence on that day and began a war which has already taken many innocent lives both Israeli and Palestinian. However, for some reason the media has chosen sides because much of the reporting is pro-Palestinian and much less report on the Israeli casualties, and hostage taking.

Once this war was started by Hamas, Israel made a vow to destroy this terrorist group whose modus operandi is to hide behind innocents believing that no one will attack innocents. There is no compassion in this terrorist group using human beings as shields and insinuating themselves behind sensitive places like families and hospitals, schools, and places of shelter so that if bombing occurs many civilian deaths will result.

The Israeli Prime Minister Mr Netanyahu then declared his own war against terrorism and especially Hamas and vowed that this group will be destroyed by the Israeli defence, and thus began, I believe, media bias against Israel with media ignoring the inception of this.

I would like to offer a different perspective about this war. It probably won’t be as modern politics would see it, or as political pundits would call it. However, I believe that understanding the “why” this ongoing war is important if we are to understand the chaos in the middle East, especially between Israel and some of its neighbours, which makes the place like a tinderbox ready to explode at any time and has been so since the founding of Israel. (14/5/1948).

Daily we watch grim news reports coming out of this war zone with at times headlines “breaking news” about another bombing of Hamas territory and the killings and the destruction and death of men, women, children, and western cameras panning across devastation to bring home to those far away (like us) a scene of utter devastation. Of children of all ages just standing there, looking around, staring eyes, almost lifeless. Not understanding. Looking lost. Just stunned. The children don’t seem to understand bombs, the deafening sound, loss of family, parents, siblings, friends, homes. Little boys digging into remains of what once thought to be a building, just looking for something. Likewise, we hear of Hamas’s devastation of places in Israel and likewise there, children and women killed, and hostages taken on October 7th, 2023, during Israel, during Celebration of Simchat Torah, (a happy celebration which celebrates the end of public torah readings for the year.) unexpected broken by surprise bombing by Hamas heralding another of its attempts to get rid of the “Zionist entity”.

We see women screaming, running, and carrying children, elderly assisted as much as possible. The foreign cameras, “press” record the images of victims screaming for anyone to help, for food, for water, shelter, medicines, peace. We see these images in Gaza and then cameras transfer to global leaders responding about such barbarity carried out by Israel against Hamas. Oddly October 7th and the beginning of this barbarity is little mentioned.

How did this sudden demonising of Israel come about? After all, on October 7th Israel was celebrating a religious day, and the young were enjoying a music and dance festival as other young around the world do. Israel’s eyes were not turned towards the Gaza Strip or Hamas but at an important time in the life of a Jew. Very much like reaching the end of Catholic annual cycle of readings for Mass. Indeed, the same.

So, into this scenario the confusion, the selective forgetting about who started the bombing on October 7th. For some reason the super hyped media has played the pro-Palestinian bias so heavily leading to global riots, threats, violence against Jews, a new anti semitism at its ugliest. Not in some isolated place but global and very openly. The vilest of attacks against Jews themselves, synagogues, schools, comments “death to all Jews” (this in our day and after WWII?) and still the media focuses on “pro Palestine.” World War II long forgotten intentionally by media and by this younger generation who know no history.

October 7th is an infamous day similar to September 11th. it’s infamous because it started as a normal day. I have been there, Jerusalem was/is a normal city, yet October 7th, 2023, and this incursion, almost 50 years to the day, changed what was a “normal” city. Those who hate the Jews and want to see them all exterminated (infants stabbed, pregnant women stabbed to death, decapitation of children, hostages taken and other war atrocities) began the launching of thousands of rockets, an all-out attack on all sides, land, sea, air. An attack on unsuspecting Jewish population similar to the one which began the 6-day war in 1967. Again, on an important Jewish holy day (Yom Kippur, 1967) a day of sorrow, a day of mourning and atonement. Jewish eyes were again on God and the attack against them unexpected. This previous time though it was by Egypt and Syria. It’s interesting because this attack (1967) also occurred during the month of Ramadan, holy time of Islam.

This is the land the Lord was born into and lived and died. It’s no wonder that there is ongoing warfare, but this war is not about Jews and Palestinians but between the enemy of both the Jews and Palestinians. A deadly feud.

Pondering over this ongoing war, a war which seems to rise every biblical generation, it occurred to me that this isn’t a war between two different peoples but between two brothers. It’s a family feud. A vendetta. A blood feud. A prolonged bitter quarrel, one brother against another. It’s a war between Isaac (Jewish) and Ishmael (Palestinian). One a son of the covenant (Isaac) and the other also a son of Abraham, who was promised by God that he would too be founder of many nations (Gen 17:6) It’s an implacable war because each of the brothers is fighting for the rights of the first born. Ishmael first born of Abraham and slave girl Hagar (not son of the covenant) and Isaac second born of Abraham and his wife Sarah (son of the covenant). I have also found it interesting that again a woman was at the heart of this ongoing death. (like first death promised if forbidden fruit eaten) God had promised that Abraham and Sarah would have descendants as many as the stars of heaven but when it seemed that God had forgotten this promise, Sarah offered to help God do his work by offering her Egyptian slave girl Hagar to her husband Abraham in order for her to conceive and give Abraham the son who would give Abraham descendants numbering the stars of heaven.(first known surrogacy?)

Sarah doubted God, and at her age even laughed when was told she would have a son within a year-therefore named son named Isaac meaning “laughter”) and so covenant promise (descendants for Abraham seemed to begin to take shape, but once Sarah had her own first-born son, she demanded that Ishmael and Hagar his mother should be banished into the desert-to die. The first born, Ishmael, the second born Isaac. Two brothers same Father different mothers.

We are told that Abraham grieved at the loss of his son (Ishmael) whom he loved, but according to scripture Yahweh told him to do as Sarah said because Ismail was not the son of the covenant, and heavy-hearted Abraham sent Hagar and her son away from the family, tribe, and protection and into the desert.

 “I the Lord who took you out of Ur of the Chaldees give you this land to take possession of it (Gen:15-17) and God made a covenant with Abram “to your descendants I give this land from Egypt to the great river Euphrates” Gen 15:17) The land of the many tribes of Israel. This he swore by his own self.

Because of Abram’s love for his first-born son Ishmael, The Lord God made a promise that he would be taken care of. Ishmael would grow into a great nation, receive a blessing but not son of the covenant. To Hagar the Angel (God) promised her that he will make Ishmael into a great nation, and as seed of Abraham, will receive a blessing, and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly. Twelve princes he will begat and will become a great nation, but the covenant was with Isaac and the land in perpetuity given to Isaac and his descendants. Whilst Ishmael would also become a leader of a great nation the promised land was not to go to his descendants. As first born of Abraham it was expected, as culture demanded, that he would become leader of the chosen people, but the covenant was not made with him and his mother, slave girl, but with Abram, his wife, and their first-born promised son who was named Isaac.

Sadly, this prophecy against Ishmael “He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone, and everyone’s hand will be against him, and he will live in hostility towards all his brothers.” (Gen 16:12) Has over the many millennia been fulfilled with the warring between tribes of Isaac and the tribes of Ismael. The banishment of his mother and himself into the desert to die would have created in him a hardness of heart because of the supposed loss of land but also because for a time, the land of Israel was forbidden from the descendants of Isaac when they were sent to Babylon, Egypt, and later after the destruction of Rome in 70AD scattered among the nations This further, because of the death of the future Messiah (Jesus) and they did not return officially to their land until after World War II (and the holocaust and slaughter of 6,000,000 jews) when they took back the land of their ancestors and swore that they would never be foreigners in other lands and will reclaim what was promised to them. Their own land. Their diaspora had ended. (Ez. 36:24) “I will gather you from among the nations and bring you back into your own land” World War II was the catalyst for their return to the land promised to them given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. How did this enmity against one another continues even into the 20th century? This is where history comes to pass.

Arabic nations, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, attacked the new invaders and attempted to drive them into the sea but were defeated. We are reminded that God intervenes when his chosen people are endangered and, in this moment, again he intervened, when a small group of people were able to defeat the armies of three other nations. We are also reminded that God said, “I will bless those who will bless you and curse those who curse you” (Gen. 23:3) and so he did and does.

From early 20th century and the Balfour Declaration” declared British support for Israel and a Jewish homeland. However, this was followed by the 1967 war which saw Israel and their ownership of their own land and the neighbouring Arabic nations in virulent opposition and enmity arise and within this turmoil arose terrorist groups like Hamas, Hezbollah, Isis, et al., whose avowed project is to destroy that “Zionist entity”. Israel

Israel is surrounded by Arabic nations and always on the alert for another incursion by lone or group aggressors, but biblically speaking the descendants of Abraham, after a long diaspora, returned to the land promised to them by God. The descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob belong here. This is the promised land spoken of by God and given to them by Him as a sign of His favour and a sign that His promises are kept and was to be a preparation a of a people for the future Mashiach.

There is a prayer for the peace of Jerusalem (Ps 122:6) which speaks of a hope that peace is wished for Jerusalem, the land that Messiah would choose to be born into, live and die for a people who would represent all of humanity. (Israel is my first-born son: (Ex 4:22) That it is surrounded by the enemy is of no surprise because it’s a land where two brothers are waging a vendetta against one another. Like the very beginning two brothers (Cain and Abel) an envy arose between them and a war which will not cease unless the Lord Himself will intervene because familial vendettas do not end until those who spoke the curse and those victims of the curse are both gone. In this situation and at this time neither Isaac nor Ishmael are willing to cede their place and portion of the first born

This present war, after a time and thousands of deaths, will also cease for a while but whilst the curse remains there will not be peace until Abraham and God bring the sons into full unity and share a land which belongs to both brothers and understand that one of the brothers (Issac would be the Father of the his descendants leading to a people to whom would be found the “mother of the Messiah) Peace can only come when humility is stronger than hatred.