

Dear Friends,

As you probably know, this past month of the war has been quite successful and progress has been made towards our war goals (by the grace of the Lord). These include dismantling Hamas's infrastructure of terror tunnels under the Gazan cities, eliminating Hamas's leadership in order to replace it with a non-aggressive governing body and creating safe zones on the Gaza and south Lebanese borders so that the evacuees may return home. However, we have not yet been able to bring the live hostages and/or their bodies back from Gaza. Chief among these achievements is the almost coincidental killing of Yahya Sinwar, the Hamas leader, during a firefight in Rafiah. Several key figures of the enemy leadership have been eliminated so far weakening their fighters' resistance.

On the 1st October Iran attacked us with about 200 missiles and drones which left only one casualty in Jericho City and minor damage to a few military bases. We were again divinely protected by the Lord and our defense systems, although we are constantly reminded that the Iron Dome, David's Sling and Arrow missile defenses are not hermetic, so we still need to get to the bomb shelters within 60 seconds. We have responded on the 26th with an air raid on Iran, destroying weapons factories, missile bases and air defense systems. This renders Iran more vulnerable for future attacks. Under pressure from the US, we did not target Iranian nuclear facilities (which could spark a regional war involving Russia) or oil refineries (which would skyrocket oil prices worldwide). So, this was a restrained response, but we proved that we can reach Iran by air (1,600 km away) and avoid all their air defenses.

It is clear now that, as reluctant as Israel was to send troops into south Lebanon, we had no choice. The only way to discover Hizbullah's tunnel networks and arms caches is to inspect every house in the south Lebanese villages and to look for tunnel shafts, usually hidden under children's beds. One such shaft leading to a vast excavated underground hall containing buggies, motorcycles and weapons was just found in Kfar Kile together with a tunnel running under the border fence into Israeli territory. This was the staging ground for a similar and simultaneous attack as the 7th October 2023 invasion from Gaza, only, by God's grace, Hamas pre-empted their attack when Hizbullah was still unprepared.

Fortunately, it seems the war might be winding down with new negotiations underway for the release of the hostages and an armistice agreement with Hizbullah. The problem remains to find a trustworthy international force to enforce the conditions of such a peace agreement, i.e. to prevent Hizbullah from re-arming and retrenching themselves on our northern border, as well as finding a governing body in Gaza that will not allow Hamas to regroup themselves again. This needs our serious prayer.

American and European envoys are shuttling to and from Israel at the moment to help install ceasefires in the war zones. But my concern is that we will accept conditions that are detrimental for Israel's future, since everyone is already so weary of this constant tension, which is exacerbated by the media reports. Most of our soldiers have had only short breaks during the yearlong campaigns and are battle-weary, many suffer from PTSD; thousands are injured and the nation is traumatized on the whole.

In spite of the war tensions, we have just celebrated the Fall feasts (Feast of Trumpets, Yom Kippur and Succoth) and I'm grateful the Lord has given us the command to celebrate Succoth with joy (in fact, it is forbidden to sit the seven days' mourning – the *shiva* - during Succoth when someone dies).

On the subject of spiritual warfare, I can share that about 40 years ago the Lord showed me two spirits, dressed in white and ostensibly “good”, the spirit of Humanism (placing human authority above God’s) and of Pacifism (peace at all costs) that were advising two persons with evil counsel. These spirits have heavily influenced our Western culture replacing God’s sovereignty, sneaking in under the guise of ‘peacemakers’ and sitting in the UN agencies for ‘human rights’ (for everyone except Israel). Those influenced by these spirits have overlooked the fact that Israel is fighting a defensive and justified war; they have painted our country as the aggressor in the current war. In spite of the IDF regularly warning civilians to evacuate the warzone under Israeli attack, we are accused of ‘genocide’ (the deliberate killing of innocent civilians) when casualties of Hamas’ “human shields” are unavoidable.

From a Biblical perspective we see that **Ecclesiastes 3:8** declares there is “a time for war and a time for peace”; man-made peace never prevails for long. We are even warned in **Jeremiah 6:14** that “They dress the wound of my people (7th October 2023) as though it were not serious. ‘Peace, peace, they say, when there is no peace.’” And in **Ezekiel 13:10**, we are told to question peace initiatives, “Because they lead my people astray, saying ‘Peace’ when there is no peace, and because when a flimsy wall is built, they cover it with whitewash.” Israel has never fought an offensive war. Throughout the existence of the State, we have only had to fight defensive wars against existential threats from our neighbours.

Believers often picture Yeshua as a pacifist; He is after all the Prince of Peace, but the Lord Himself points out that only His is the perfect peace in **John 14:27**, “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives...” Another Scripture to dispel the pacifist image of Yeshua is when He declares in **Matthew 10:34**, “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but the sword”. We should remember that Yeshua returns as a Warrior King, Lord of the hosts (armies) to fight wars with His enemies (e.g. Armageddon) and make peace afterwards. Having said all this, please know that we all long for peace with our enemies, even if it is temporary; our hearts are moved for the plight of the poor Gazan, Lebanese and Iranian people, for our war is not with them, but with the terror governments they suffer under.

Finally, what can we do against these deeply entrenched spirits of Humanism and Pacifism in our cultures? The weapon the Lord’s gives us is the sword of His Word: **2 Corinthians 10: 4-5**, “The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” May the Lord reveal to you the strongholds of deceiving spirits in your vicinity and guide you how to demolish them.

Prayer points:

- For Israel not to be drawn into a situation of exchanging endless retaliatory attacks with Iran.
- For our governmental and military leadership to agree on ceasefires both in Lebanon and Gaza that will not be detrimental for our country in the long run.
- For release of individuals and officials from the influence of deceiving spirits of Humanism and Pacifism and for their truthful assessment of the whole situation in the Middle East.
- For minimum loss of life (civilian and IDF forces) during this ongoing conflict.

May the Lord’s blessing rest upon you; may His face shine upon you and give you peace and joy.
Hanna Haustein (for Yezreel Valley house fellowship).