

WARRING ANGLES ON BEHALF OF ISRAEL

By Michael Utterback

*"For behold, in those days and at that time, **when I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations**, And bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will enter into judgment with them there on account of My people, My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; they have also divided up My land.*

(Joel 3:1-2)

v.9** Proclaim this among the nations: "Prepare for war! Wake up the mighty men, Let all the men of war draw near, let them come up. **V.10 Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears**; Let the weak say, 'I am strong.' " **11 Assemble and come, all you nations, and gather together all around. Cause Your mighty ones to go down there, O Lord.

(Joel 3:9-11)

Recently I came across a set of scriptures in the book of Joel that captured my attention. I've read these verses more times than I can count and even used them in articles and in sermons on occasion, but just now, they are more relevant than ever before.

The scriptures above describe a cataclysmic time in Israel's history when the nations of the earth will, not only condemn Israel, but will come up together as one army to bring Israel under subjection to world dominance. It can be safely said, there has never been a time in history where such an event could occur... **except for the time and world we are living in right now.**

WHERE WE ARE NOW

When Israel became a nation in 1948, most of the free world was sympathetic regarding the suffering of the Jews. But now, just six short decades and a few years as a nation, things have changed. Even with the glaring facts of the unspeakable horrors of the holocaust where Jews were singled out and exterminated, Israel is again facing another Goliath. Slowly, methodically, the foundations have been laid, one more time, for Israel's destruction. In this present generation not long after the holocaust, spurred on by fanatical Islamic regimes and their sympathizers, hatred for Israel is commonplace and in many cases, the accepted norm. No matter what Israel does, it's simply not enough to curb the hostility.

When Israel gave in to world pressure pulling out of the Sinai in the 80s and Gaza in 2005, resulting in tens of thousands of Israelis losing their homes and livelihoods, Israel haters screamed, "not enough!" Although the Palestinians haven't kept even one commitment for a so-called peace agreement, it doesn't make the slightest dent in world opinion, with both hands over their eyes,

regarding the stalemate in peace negotiations, world leaders proclaim, "Israel is to blame!" With present day feelings towards Israel, one could easily conclude, given the choice the world would prefer blood-thirsty Islamic regimes over a democratic Israel.

In my opinion, this mindset of the nations is setting the stage for a final conflict with none other than the God of Israel Himself.

GOD'S WORD TO THIS GENERATION

In the verses quoted at the beginning of this article, God says *HE will gather all nations to come against the nation of Israel*, especially the city of Jerusalem. He will cause them to come to the valley of Jehoshaphat, which is actually the Kidron Valley, located between the Mount of Olives and the Temple Mount.

(For those who are not familiar with this location, most pictures depicting Jerusalem, especially ones featuring the Islamic Dome of the Rock, is taken from the Mount of Olives and looking over the Valley of Jehoshaphat).

Stop for a moment and think about this. Through the prophet Joel, God is saying that HE WILL make the nations come against Israel. They think it will be their choice. In their self-righteousness condemnation, the leaders of the nations will devise a military plan together to invade Israel and take Jerusalem, but in reality, it will be the God of Israel who will be orchestrating this event.

Most Christians would be theologically challenged if you told them God is the one stirring up the nations to come against Israel! Or, they would wrongly conclude, 'Israel deserves another lashing!'

Nothing could be farther from the truth! In fact, these verses reveal *the purpose of this gathering* of the nations is to bring a judgment against them! Not Israel!

The two reasons for the judgment are stated: "You scattered my people! You divided My Land." It must be pointed out God calls Israel His people and His heritage. He also calls Israel, His land!

I think the most compelling verses, and the ones that caught my attention, are verses nine through eleven. In these, God taunts the nations. He tells them... "*Prepare for war!*" Then He instructs them to build weapons! "*Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears.*" Obviously, plowshares and pruning hooks are agricultural instruments designed to feed people. It would be foolish to destroy the very tools you need to exist in order to make weapons of war. Just think of the starving millions on this planet compared to the enormous cost of sophisticated weapons and warriors.

Today, we are being inundated with the horrors of a nuclear Iran. It's now a known fact in the coming months; Iran will have the capabilities to destroy its enemy, Israel. At the UN Assembly Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad insinuated, that is precisely Iran's goal, as he called for the "elimination" of the State of Israel. It was no surprise, few nations protested.

WHAT GOD WILL DO TO THE NATIONS THAT COME AGAINST ISRAEL

Truly, the prospect of Iran with nuclear weapons is frightening. All of us living in the land of Israel are very aware, we are surrounded by nations who would revel and rejoice at the eradication of Israel and those who love her.

In a macho world of bravado speeches, it would be easy to proclaim the past feats of the Israeli Defense Force (IDF); when you consider the many wars wherein Israel was outnumbered and its destruction was sure, miraculously they came out on top.' Given the astonishing history of Israel's victories in conflict, it would be easy to boast in the strength of Israel's military prowess.

A big mistake! Although Israel's army is one of the best in the world, it's not the IDF alone that God calls on in this fight against the nations. Notice the very last phrase in verse eleven after the nations bring their weapons against Jerusalem: He says, "*Cause Your mighty ones to go down there, O Lord!*" Who are these 'mighty ones?'

It is apparent; the 'mighty ones' are His warring angels! They are the Angelic Defense Force (ADF), who God commands to fight against the nations that come up against Jerusalem! No doubt, the same ones Jesus mentioned in the Garden of Gethsemane when He said, "*Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and He will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?*"

I cannot predict the events that will occur in the next few months in the Middle East. One thing is absolutely certain; the God of Israel will protect His people. The final outcome of all these events will be the fulfillment of the primary theme replete in the book of Ezekiel: *Then the nations will know that I am the God of Israel!*

A final thought: God gives us a prophetic sign as to when these things will happen. In the first verse He says: "*in those days and at that time, when I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem.*" In other words, when the Jews come home the final time, it will set the stage for the Lord to force the nations come up against Jerusalem.

As many of you know, Ezra International and her partners have been involved in the return of the Jews to the land of Israel since the iron curtain came down in 1991. Ezra's workers have assisted, over 120,000 Jews to their homeland, Israel. Even though this has been a long time calling, the passion to help Jews to their land hasn't diminished, in fact, the Lord is compelling us (according to Isaiah 49:22) to increase our efforts and extend our net for those about to come.

The challenge is before us, Israel needs us now more than ever!



Michael Utterback, founder and director of Ministry to Israel (MTI).

Under Michael's leadership, MTI established a centre in Israel called the Jerusalem Support Center in 1997 which is dedicated to aiding new immigrants in practical ways. Tens of thousands of individuals have been helped since its inception. Additionally, MTI supports Ezra's *aliyah* work in the fSU and South America.

Since 1988, Michael has traveled worldwide speaking to Christians in conventions, seminars, churches as well as to many Jewish groups, on behalf of Israel and raising funds for MTI's benevolent projects within Israel. Michael served as International Director of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ) from 2000 to 2004.

Michael and his wife Gina live in Jerusalem and have two married daughters and four grandchildren, now living in the United States.

www.ministrytoisrael.com