

PROPHETIC *Newsletter*

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Iranian Cleric Threatens Israeli Cities; Nuclear Program Restarts

Adding to the tensions between the two countries, an Iranian cleric; Ayatollah Ahmed Khatami, a member of Iran's Assembly of Experts, threatened the destruction of Israeli cities Tel Aviv and Haifa. This statement came amidst a massive protest in Iran after the U.S announced it was pulling out of the ill-conceived

2015 nuclear deal. Thousands of Iranians gathered in the streets of Tehran and other major Iranian cities chanting "Death to America" and "Death to Israel," cheered when Khatami announced "The holy system of the Islamic Republic will step up its missile capabilities day by day so that Israel, this occupying regime, will become sleepless and the nightmare will constantly haunt it that if it does anything foolish, Tel Aviv and Haifa will be brought down in ruins and totally destroyed." Such brash threats came on the heels of the announcement by Iran's foreign minister Javad Zariff that Iran would be restarting its nuclear program. Zariff stated that Iran was "taking all necessary steps in preparation for Iran to pursue industrial-scale enrichment without any restrictions."

These statements echo those made by



HINDSON



Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei who says Israel will not exist in 25 years, said the Jewish state could face destruction if it continues to challenge Iran. Such statement from Iran's religious leaders causes great concern, even more so when combined with statements other Iranian leaders have made recently.

The Iranian military also weighed in on the U.S. withdraw from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. The deputy head of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, Brigadier General Hossein Salami threatened Israel with destruction saying, "our finger is on the trigger and the missiles are ready at any given moment that the enemy conducts something against us, and we will

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launch them.”

Gen. Salami leveled part of his statements directly at Israeli leaders saying, “We know you very well, you are exposed to great harm because you have no depth, you are surrounded from every direction and you have nowhere to flee except to fall into the sea. Don’t put faith in your military bases because they are in firing range and we can attack them.” The General added, “Don’t place your hope in the United States and Britain; when they arrive you will already have disappeared.”

The ever resilient Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reacted to the threats from Iran, saying, “We are certain of our capabilities to protect ourselves with our own power.” Netanyahu urged the world to “unite in order to sever the arms of evil spreading there and everywhere.” Interestingly, Rabbi Pinchas Winston recently observed the situation as a prophetic portent warning, “Things are about to get Biblical.”

The Bible plainly teaches that when we can see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, we should know that desolation is near (Luke 21:20, 22). Indeed, it is not too great of a distance between the threats from Ayatollah Khatami and General Salami, the “rumors of war” and nation rising against nation that

our Lord Jesus warned of in Matthew 24:6-7. However, we must be careful to remember that Jesus Himself indicated that when we hear of such wars “the end is not yet” (Matthew 24:6).

Thus, while these repeated threats of aggression toward Israel may be a step in the direction toward fulfilling certain Bible prophecies, we cannot view such events as a fulfillment of prophecy in itself. Unfortunately, this seems strikingly familiar to what the Bible predicted would occur as the last days

approaches. With the growing threats against Israel from Iran – coupled with the growing relationship between Iran, Syria, and Russia

– one cannot help but be reminded of the Bible’s predictions concerning a gathering of world powers, aligned together as expressed enemies of Israel, in the last days (Joel 2:11; 3:2, 9, 14; Psalm 2:1-3; Zecariah 14:2-3).

While the potential is certainly very much in place for nations to rise up against Israel, that future event and the accompanying last days predicted by the Bible could be a month, a year, ten years, or even a hundred years from now. Jesus cautioned us; however, that no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son Himself. Only the Father knows (Matthew 24:36). — PNL

PRAY: Pray that these recent threatening statements made by leaders of Iran would prove to be empty, veiled threats, and that the Nation of Israel would not be a victim of the violence and annihilation insinuated by Iran’s repeated threats.

Pray also for the people of Iran; specifically that the small number of Christians in that country would be protected by God’s hand and allowed to have a positive impact a spread the Gospel throughout that nation as the only true realization of peace comes through the salvation of the Prince of Peace!

U.S. and Russia Could be Close to War in Syria

According to several reports by major news agency, beleaguered Syrian President Bashar al-Assad stated that the U.S. and Russia have come close to war as a result of their separate military campaigns in his country. Assad divulged this information during a recent television interview.

Assad stated, “We were close to have direct conflict between the Russian forces and the American forces. Fortunately, it has been avoided - not by the wisdom of the American leadership, but by the wisdom of the Russian leadership.” This statement shows Assad’s close friendship and reliance on Russian support as the civil war in Syria had raged for over seven years. Assad specifically pointed to the U.S. airstrikes against Syrian forces and Russian mercenary troops stationed in the Deir az-Zor region. The series of U.S. air strikes are believed to have killed scores of Russian mercenaries, along with Moscow’s Syria militia allies. Obviously – as mercenaries – these were not “official” Russian troops but they were Russian citizens and this could result in some serious repercussions. The mercenaries are said to have been hired by private military firms backing Syrian pro-government troops. U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis insisted that he did not have information that “Russian contractors” were among the casualties; however, he has acknowledged that U.S. air strikes have killed more than 100 fighters.

Some of the casualties of the recent U.S. air strikes have been positively identified as Russian citizens. Vladimir Loginov, from Russia’s western Kaliningrad region, and Kirill

Ananyev, a radical nationalist from Moscow were believed to have been hired by a private Russian company called PMC Wagner. This company is described as a private military contracting agency, whose contractors have reportedly taken part in various conflicts around



the globe. Additionally, more than 45 Russian military personnel have been officially confirmed killed since then. An unknown number of private military contractors have also died. Sadly, more than 500,000 people have been killed and millions displaced

since Syria’s war started in 2011 with the brutal repression of anti-government protests. The Syrian regime has repeatedly been accused of excessively brutal tactics including the use of chemical weapons, sieges, mass executions and torture against civilians have led to war crimes investigations and a growing concern around the world that more direct measures need to be taken against the Assad government. However, such measures would doubtlessly be seen as an untenable aggression by the Russian government which could have some serious prophetic implications.

Many Bible teachers have pointed out the similarities between Russia’s alliance with Syria and the predictions of Ezekiel 38-39 that foretell of a great confederation of nations that gather against Israel and attack from the north during the great end-times battle of Gog and Magog. Likewise, the growing alliance between Syria, Iran, and Russia – coupled with the threats the nation of Turkey has made toward

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New Iranian Military Base in Syria

In their never ending pursuit to threaten the existence of Israel and gain a dominant foothold in the unstable Middle East, new satellite imagery has confirmed that Iran has recently built another permanent military base outside Syria's capital city complete with hangars used to store missiles capable of hitting all of Israel. The satellite images from a company called ImageSat International have been published by several major news outlets. ImageSat is a professional commercial provider of superior, high-resolution satellite images that are obtained through their high-resolution Earth Remote Observation Satellites. ImageSat provides photographic information to governments and their defense forces for national security and intelligence purposes and is widely recognized and respected in this field. According to US intelligence experts who have viewed the recent images, the photos show the new Iranian base located only eight miles northwest of Damascus. The photos indicated that the base is being operated by the Quds Force — the special operations arm of Tehran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). This means additional Iranian troops on the ground in Syria! The photos also show two new white



hangars, each roughly 90 feet long by 60 feet wide. Such buildings are commonly used to store short-range and medium-range missiles.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had previously warned Tehran against building any military bases in Syria. Ignoring Netanyahu's comments, Iran had previously completed a base south of Damascus that was subsequently destroyed by Israeli surface-to-surface missiles in December of last year. This new Iranian base was built to replace that facility and to enable Iran to continue its support of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, and his regime's aggressive bombing campaign in the region

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Earliest Fragment of Mark's Gospel

Some very exciting news has recently been published that has piqued the interest of Bible scholars everywhere. According to Christianity Today, the newly released Mark manuscript was found in the form of papyri by two young archaeologists who were sifting through an ancient Egyptian garbage dump between 1896 and 1906! That these details concerning Mark's Gospel are only now coming to light is not surprising since only about one percent of what was found at

the site has been published. However, over 100 years ago Bernard Grenfell and Arthur Hunt found a treasure trove of ancient manuscripts. Their finds include some of the earliest fragments of the New Testament and other early Christian writings. The veritable treasure trove of ancient writings includes several biblical texts, non-canonical apocryphal texts, classical texts,

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tax receipts, letters, and even a contract that stipulates the pre-determined outcome of a wrestling match. Some of this collection now resides at the Museum of the Bible located in Washington, D.C. Also published in the latest release of manuscripts from the ancient dump is a third-century papyrus of Luke 13: 25-30 and a fourth-century papyrus of Philemon 6 - 8 and 18 -20. The Philemon papyrus is exceptionally rare and is among the earliest copies of that book that have ever been found!

Recently, the Egyptian Exploration Society announced a new document pulled from this ancient garbage pile—a fragment from the Gospel of Mark dating from A.D. 150-250. This is very significant as this fragment represents the earliest portion of Mark found to date. Interestingly, the fragment of Mark was only recognized to be in the collection in 2015. The Mark fragment is tiny. It measures just under 7 inches (4.4 x 4 centimeters). Christianity Today reports that it contains only a few letters on each side of the papyri indicating it was in the form of a book rather than a scroll. The fragment contains Mark 1:7-9 and 16-18. Even though this is the oldest portion of Mark ever found, some are disappointed as there was hope that the fragment could be dated as early as the first century. Finding any of these first-century writings today would bring the reader closer to the original manuscripts. Bible scholars use the term “autographs” to refer to the original documents written by the biblical

authors. Unfortunately, the original documents that comprise the New Testament have all been lost to history.

Nevertheless, such an ancient discovery provides us with additional support for the veracity of our Scriptures. Even though the original autographs disappeared thousands of years ago, God has preserved His word just as the Scriptures promised. For example Psalm 12:6-7 offers a wonderful promise that God

will preserve his words forever. Likewise, the prophet Isaiah, who was inspired by the Holy Spirit, was able to look down through the tunnel of time and see that God’s Word would remain forever. Isaiah observed, “The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands



forever” (Isaiah 40:8). This prophetic promise of preservation was reaffirmed by the New Testament author Peter who quoted Isaiah and referred to it as “the word that was preached to you” (1 Peter 1:24-25). This is also what our Savior promised. Jesus said “verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Matthew 5:18). The “jot” and “tittle” Jesus referred to were the smallest strokes of a letter in the Hebrew alphabet. Thus, Jesus promised that even the smallest details of God’s Word would be preserved for the ages! As we continue to discover and translate the ancient fragments of Scripture, such as this copy of Mark, we are reminded of God’s glorious promise to preserve His Word. As such, we should continue to pray that God’s Word will continue to achieve that which He desires (Isaiah 55:11). — PNL

PRAY: Pray for those scholars who are still sorting through this ancient treasure trove of material. Pray that even more ancient copies of Scripture will emerge and be used as a witness to the faithfulness of our Savior.

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Israel – also has the attention of many prophecy teachers. Interestingly, Ezekiel used the ancient geographical names of these countries that were readily known to his original audience; Rosh, Magog, Meshech, Tubal, Persia, Ethiopia, Libya, Gomer, and Beth-togarmah (Ezekiel

38:1-6). Of specific concern is the nations of Persia, Rosh, Meshech, Tubal, Gomer, and Beth-togarmah. All of these ancient names refer to the modern nations of Russia, Turkey, and Iran! Should this current climate continue to escalate with force, one could easily see how the confederation of nations Ezekiel prophesied about could develop in and around Syria. We need to be in prayer for this situation. — PNL

PRAY: Pray that the Lord would prevent a war between the U.S. and Russia. Pray for a quick and peaceful resolution to the lingering conflict in Syria. Pray also for the continuing protection of the millions of refugees created as a result of the Syrian civil war.

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around Damascus. U.S. White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders stated recently that “Syria is terrorizing hundreds of thousands of civilians with airstrikes, artillery, rockets and a looming ground attack.” Therefore, Iran’s re-establishment of a permanent military base in the region will allow al-Assad to intensify his attacks many of which are known to target civilians who are essentially trapped in the region due to the years of brutal civil war that has devastated the Syrian infrastructure and strained the international community immeasurably. Thus, this is a calculated move by Iran to position themselves as a major force in the region and gain them a strategic advantage in their expressed desire to wipe Israel off the face of the map.

Especially in light of the threats Iran has made recently against Israel, this situation also reminds me of the situation prophesized in the pages of Scripture and should concern us as it bears several similarities to certain end-times predictions in the Bible. The prophet Ezekiel,

writing more than 500 years before the birth of Christ, predicted that a mighty ruler would form a confederation of multiple nations to launch a massive invasion of Israel known as the Gog and Magog invasion (Ezekiel 38-39). The leader of this invasion, according to Ezekiel will be a ruler with the title “Gog” (Ezekiel 38:1-6). Interestingly, as many Bible teachers have pointed out, Ezekiel makes repeated references to the Gog and Magog armies coming from the “north” and both Syria and Iran are situated to the north of Israel. Moreover, Ezekiel’s list of nations specifically mentions Persia as a leader in the end time invasion of Israel. As history teaches us Persia is the ancient name for Iran. Thus, Ezekiel reveals that Iran (ancient Persia), will assemble an army in the last days to invade Israel to steal the wealth of Israel (Ezekiel 38:11-12).

Likewise, while not necessarily referring to the same eschatological event, the book of Revelation also uses Ezekiel’s prophecy about Gog and Magog to portray a final end-times attack on the nation of Israel (Revelation 20:8-9).— PNL

PRAY: Pray that the involvement of Iran in the Syrian civil war would cease and not lead to further destruction. Pray also that God would keep His hand of protection upon Israel during these disturbing days as their enemies continue to encroach upon them and threaten their very existence.