

# Newsbytes

The First Watch

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“Let us be alert to the season in which we are living. It is the season of the Blessed Hope, calling for us to cut our ties with the world and build ourselves on this One who will soon appear. He is our hope—a Blessed Hope enabling us to rise above our times and fix our gaze upon Him.” Tozer

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**I see this all over social media, people saying that this hurricane represents God judging America for their part in the current round of peace talks (which go on fairly regularly in other locales). I have several questions regarding this position, but the main points in my thinking for your consideration are this: Why would God judge those poor suffering people of Houston alone for a Washington DC pursuit of Mideast peace? What about other nations involved? Is God also judging them? Why isn't God sending fire on Gaza?**

**How can we expect these people in Texas USA to be drawn to the Lord with this position, assigning them judgment that is a) not clearly judgment therefore speaking for God on something He has not spoken on and b) leaving the door open for every awful event to be a judgment from now on? Christians - American Christians who think the world revolves around us - need to think before they speak for God. I think there is a lot to lose with this position in the scheme of things and little to gain. Let's not exchange what we know for what we don't, as Pastor Chuck used to say - let's call it a birth pang which it likely is. Christians prefer the drama of random storm and star alignment judgment apparently but it ought not to be so. Amir adds his excellent perspective below. We will be livestreaming Amir at the conference this week so make it a point to attend. - MD**

## Is Hurricane Harvey in the Bible?

Amir's commentary on the Hurricane Harvey in light of Bible prophecy.

Hurricane Harvey, the most powerful and devastating hurricane to hit the United States in over a decade, has been nothing short of a catastrophe. Hundreds of thousands have been displaced, homes and lives uprooted and 38 casualties from the storm.

While there is no doubt that Hurricane Harvey is a horrible natural disaster, we must remember that it's part of a global phenomena of natural disasters and sadly many aren't getting any media coverage at all. Floods in many parts of Asia, famines in large parts of Africa and Yemen and record number of earthquakes worldwide are hardly getting any attention anymore.

This morning, at least 7 were killed when a building collapsed in Mumbai due to heavy flooding. The coastal city of over 20 million has been the most recent affected by storms during the height of the monsoon season. The floods have killed over 1,200 in India, Bangladesh and Nepal, displacing thousands.

Such intensity of natural disasters is exactly what Romans 8:22-24 is talking about. These are clearly the birth pangs before the soon redemption of our body (the Rapture).

“...For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?...”

In my opinion, associating Harvey with the “peace process” in Israel (which is no longer a “big deal” to anyone in the region anymore) is stretching it to unwanted places.

The association of every devastating natural disaster in America to Israel not only isn't accurate, but can indirectly promote a very wrong picture of God and His Word. As if Israel is more important to Him than the unborn etc. Think of the lay Christian who can't bear anymore, the unrighteousness all around him, yet is being told that God acts in judgment only when the future of the land of Israel is at stake?

Being familiar with the negotiating process in the Middle East, Trump's Administration is the friendliest we have ever had since Nixon. The two-state solution is an old idea offered by the UN in the 1940's. Since 1967, Israel itself has been offering the Palestinians land for peace. Way before we had even one single settlement in Judea, Samaria, Gaza or the Golan Heights, the Arabs refused to any solution that would allow a vibrant Jewish state to remain standing.

As an insider, I can tell you that Prime Minister Netanyahu is getting what he wants from the current American team. The ideas being presented to the Palestinians today by Kushner are ideas that were promoted by Netanyahu himself. No one in Israel- or in the whole region- seriously believes that the Palestinians will ever accept those ideas anyway. As long as we don't agree on Jerusalem, borders or refugees, nothing will ever move forward.

Last December, the UN Security Council adopted a landmark resolution demanding a halt to all Israeli settlement in “the occupied territories” after Barack Obama's Administration refused to veto the resolution. The vote didn't exclude Jerusalem's Old City as part of the “occupied territories” thus suggesting that the Western Wall, the Jewish Quarter and the Temple Mount aren't Israel's legal territory. The vote that was no doubt Obama's last revenge on Israel was far more “punishment worthy” than anything Trump has ever done.

So why does Hurricane Harvey happen now and not then?

If anything, I believe that America as a nation may one day be judged by God, but surely not for Jared Kushner's visit to Israel. It's about much more important things that America has been doing against God and His Word such as the heavy promotion of killing the unborn, sexual immorality, redefining marriage and family, divorce, idolatry, worship of mammon, allowing Satan worship, mocking Jesus while protecting Allah, etc.

Isaiah 5:20:

“...Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!..”

Awaiting His Return,  
Amir Tsarfati

# Israel Puts World On Notice - Military Action If Iran Moves Into Syria

ins.org

Iran is expanding into Syria, converting the country into a military and weapons base, filling it with heavily armed Shi'a proxy forces, and earmarking it as a launchpad for future attacks on Israel.

Israel, in turn, has recently put the international community on notice, warning that a failure to stop the Iranian push into Syria will result in Israeli military action.

In this context, Israeli officials have traveled to the U.S. and Russia in recent weeks, to share information on Iran's military moves into Syria, and to sound out the alarm over what may come next.

Yet it remains far from clear that either Moscow or Washington can or will pressure the Iranians to stop. According to one report, Russia has placed its advanced S-400 air defense system near Iranian weapons factories in Syria.

The factories purportedly produce long-range guided missiles for the Lebanese terror group Hezbollah to use against Israel. Russia has not confirmed the report.

In August, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu traveled to Sochi, Russia, where he met with President Vladimir Putin at his summer residence for an urgent meeting on Iran's activities in Syria.

Iran, which runs the ground war in Syria on behalf of the Bashar al-Assad regime, has become an important regional ally of Russia, which oversees air operations in support of the Iranian-led axis. Together, they have managed to turn the tide in the Syrian war against the Sunni rebel organizations.

The Assad regime has been regaining increasing amounts of territory, into which Iran and its agents pour in. Islamic State's collapse is also leaving behind a vacuum that is being filled by Iran.

Meanwhile, a senior Israeli defense delegation, made up of the head of the Mossad, Yossi Cohen, and the leader of the IDF Military Intelligence Directorate, Maj.-Gen. Herzi Halevi, landed in Washington in mid-August to discuss what Iran is doing in Syria with U.S. National Security Adviser, H. R. McMaster.

Israeli delegation members noted "a kind of embarrassment and lack of a clear position" among Trump administration officials regarding America's commitments in the Middle East, particularly in regards to preventing the spread of Iranian influence in Syria, Yedioth Ahronoth reported.

U.S. Ambassador to Israel David Friedman told The Jerusalem Post that "the Americans fully support the Israeli objectives...at least from a macro perspective, the Americans and Israelis are of the same mind."

Yet the newspaper reported that Friedman was "unwilling to discuss...how this objective of keeping Iran out of a post-civil war Syria can be reached."

According to Professor Eyal Zisser, an expert on Syria from Tel Aviv University, the U.S. is prepared to hand off Syria to Russia. "As part of this package deal, which will free the Trump Administration from the burden of Syria, the U.S. is willing to accept the Russian willingness to grant Iran a grip on Syria," he added.

Zisser said that Russia is aware of Israel's concerns, and is willing to move Hezbollah and Iran back from the Israeli border by a few kilometers, but that ultimately, Moscow views Iran as a legitimate force.

Moscow also thinks that Israel has to come to accept Iran as such, so long as the Iranian presence does not turn into a missile attack on Israel.

"The bottom line is that neither Russia nor the US are accepting Israel's outcry, and are unwilling to push Iran out of Syria. They even view it as a stabilizing factor, and apparently they do not take Israel's threats very seriously," Zisser added.

Israel's diplomatic warning campaign is in full swing, but it is reasonable to believe that the real objective is to create legitimacy for future Israeli action, Israel's former National Security Adviser, Maj.-Gen. Yaakov Amidror, told JNS.org.

"The Israeli warning regarding an intention to set red lines is important, not because the two powers (the U.S. and Russia) will act, but because when Israel acts, it will have much more legitimacy," said Amidror.

Col. (ret.) Reuven Erlich, director of Tel Aviv-based Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, which has been monitoring events in Syria, said that America's goal is to dismantle Islamic State's control in areas of Syria--not to engage in nation-building there or prevent the buildup of Iranian-backed Shi'a forces. "The U.S. policy in Syria is to destroy ISIS's territorial control," he said, explaining that other issues, like the Syrian regime's relations with others, are out of the range of American policy or capabilities in Syria.

"So if we suddenly see Shi'ite militias and Hezbollah in the Syrian Golan Heights, they (the Americans) will not be able to do much," Erlich said.

He added, "But the U.S. can activate pressure levers that it has with Russia, which is and will continue to be a strong player in Syria, and which can pressure the Syrian regime. The U.S. is not, however, building a position on the ground that would enable it to come to our assistance if we need it."

Russia does have a presence in Syria, and therefore, an ability to influence the Damascus regime and Iran, Erlich argued. Still, he said, "The Russians will not enter into a confrontation with Iran because of us. But if they realize that an Iranian presence in the Golan Heights will have a price, the Russians can be a restraining factor. That too, however, is in doubt."

Ultimately, Erlich said, Israel must rely on its own ability to defend itself. Quoting Hillel the Elder, he said, "There is a saying: If I am not for myself, who will be for me?"

Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman Aug. 24 released a statement that was both unusual and littered with clues about the seriousness of the latest developments.

"The fact that Iran is trying to turn the whole of Syrian territory into a forward outpost against the State of Israel, with military bases, with thousands of Shi'ite mercenaries that are brought in from all over the Middle East into Syria, with an Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) air force base, with an IRGC naval base, the attempt to manufacture precision weaponry in Lebanon--this is a reality that we do not intend to accept," he said.

Lieberman said Netanyahu's meeting in Sochi was part of an attempt to use every available diplomatic avenue, hinting heavily that military action would follow if diplomacy failed.

"All that we are trying to do right now is to use all of these avenues to solve the problem," he said.

In a clearly veiled warning, Lieberman added, "I hope that we can solve it through the diplomatic

channels, through the international community, with vigorous activity in every direction. I hope we will not have to think otherwise."

## Report: Earthquake Suggests North Korea Carried Out Sixth Nuclear Test

The quake, which measured at 6.3, comes just after news broke of a North Korean hydrogen bomb.

SEOUL, Sept 3 (Reuters) - A shallow, 6.3 magnitude earthquake shook North Korea on Sunday, suggesting it had detonated a sixth nuclear device, hours after it said it had developed an advanced hydrogen bomb that possesses "great destructive power."

The earthquake struck 75 km (45 miles) north northwest of Kimchaek. Previous recent tremors in the region have been caused by nuclear tests, which if the case this time round, is bound to increase the tension hours after U.S. President Donald Trump and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe talked by phone about the "escalating" nuclear crisis.

The quake was only 10 km deep, the U.S. Geological Survey said, again suggesting a nuclear device.

Witnesses in the Chinese city of Yanji, on the border with North Korea, said they felt a tremor that lasted roughly 10 seconds, followed by an aftershock. The hydrogen bomb report by North Korea's official KCNA news agency comes amid heightened regional tension following Pyongyang's two tests of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) in July that potentially could fly about 10,000 km (6,200 miles), putting many parts of the mainland United States within range.

Under third-generation leader Kim Jong Un, North Korea has been pursuing a nuclear device small and light enough to fit on a long-range ballistic missile, without affecting its range and making it capable of surviving re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere.

North Korea, which carries out its nuclear and missile programs in defiance of UN Security Council resolutions and sanctions, "recently succeeded" in making a more advanced hydrogen bomb that will be loaded on to an ICBM, KCNA said.

"The H-bomb, the explosive power of which is adjustable from tens kiloton to hundreds kiloton, is a multi-functional thermonuclear nuke with great destructive power which can be detonated even at high altitudes for super-powerful EMP (electromagnetic pulse) attack according to strategic goals," KCNA said.

"All components of the H-bomb were homemade and all the processes ... were put on the Juche basis, thus enabling the country to produce powerful nuclear weapons as many as it wants," KCNA quoted Kim as saying.

Juche is North Korea's homegrown ideology of self-reliance that is a mix of Marxism and extreme nationalism preached by state founder Kim Il Sung, the current leader's grandfather. It says its weapons programs are needed to counter U.S. aggression.

North Korea offered no evidence for its latest claim, and Kim Dong-yub, a military expert at Kyungnam University's Institute of Far Eastern Studies in Seoul, was skeptical.

"Referring to tens to hundreds of kilotons, it doesn't appear to be talking about a fully fledged H-bomb. It's more likely a boosted nuclear device," Kim said, referring to an atomic bomb which uses some hydrogen isotopes to boost explosive yield.

A hydrogen bomb can achieve thousands of kilotons of explosive yield - massively more powerful than some 10 to 15 kilotons that North Korea's last nuclear test in September was estimated to have produced, similar to the bomb dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, in 1945.

Kim Jong Un, who visited the country's nuclear weapons institute, "watched an H-bomb to be loaded into new ICBM" and "set forth tasks to be fulfilled in the research into nukes," KCNA said.

Pictures released by the agency showed Kim inspecting a silver-colored, hourglass-shaped warhead in the visit accompanied by nuclear scientists, with a concept diagram of its Hwasong-14 long-range ballistic missile seen hanging on the wall.

The shape shows a marked difference from pictures of the ball-shaped device North Korea released in March last year, and appears to indicate the appearance of a two-stage thermonuclear weapon, or a hydrogen bomb, said Lee Choon-geun, senior research fellow at state-run Science and Technology Policy Institute.

"The pictures show a more complete form of a possible hydrogen bomb, with a primary fission bomb and a secondary fusion stage connected together in an hourglass shape," Lee said.

Tensions on the Korean peninsula have been high since last month when North Korea threatened to launch missiles into the sea near the strategically located U.S. Pacific territory of Guam after Trump said Pyongyang would face "fire and fury" if it threatened the United States.

North Korea further raised regional tensions on Tuesday by launching an intermediate-range ballistic missile over Japan, drawing international condemnation.

Trump and Abe spoke by phone and said that in face of an "escalating" situation with North Korea that close cooperation between their countries and with South Korea was needed, Abe told reporters.

Trump told Abe that the United States, as an ally, was 100 percent with Japan, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasutoshi Nishimura told reporters.

"The two leaders reaffirmed the importance of close cooperation between the United States, Japan and South Korea in the face of the growing threat from North Korea," the White House said in a statement. "President Trump noted that he looks forward to continued trilateral coordination on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly."

The United States has repeatedly urged China, the North's sole major ally, to do more to rein in its neighbor.

North Korea last year conducted its fourth and fifth nuclear tests, saying the fourth in January 2016 was a successful hydrogen bomb test, although outside experts say the claim has not been proved.

Impoverished North Korea and the rich, democratic South are technically still at war because their 1950-53 conflict ended in a truce, not a peace treaty. The North regularly threatens to destroy the South and its main ally, the United States.