

Opinion: Egypt, The Great Antagonist of Israel

✖ *A response to the unrest in Cairo by ICEJ Executive Director, Rev. Malcolm Hedding*

Egypt, but for brief moments in history, has always been a great antagonist of the people of Israel. This saga really began some 1700 years before Christ when Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers, was wrongly accused and left to rot in an Egyptian jail.

If it were not for God's supernatural deliverance he would have perished there! His rise to power was phenomenal as was his leadership skills. He not only saved Egypt from starvation but he delivered his family and the known world as well and thereby guaranteed the existence of the Jewish people and the Messianic line of descent. If it were not for God's supernatural deliverance Israel would have perished!

As time went by a Pharaoh arose "who knew not Joseph" and literally enslaved the Jewish people, murdered their babies and threatened the nation with extinction. God went before them and provided a deliverer in the person of Moses. He brought Israel out of Egypt with great signs and wonders by his hands. If it were not for God's supernatural deliverance Israel would have perished!

When the children of Israel got to the Red Sea the Egyptians had them cornered. There was nowhere to go and so, once again, by a miracle, in response to Moses outstretched arm, the sea parted and Israel escaped unharmed on dry land. If it were not for God's supernatural deliverance Israel would have perished at the hands of the Egyptians!

Throughout history, up until the present day, Egypt has resolutely set itself against the purpose of God concerning

the Jews and has tried, time and time again, to destroy them. In 1967 the now famous Six Day War of June broke out. Abdul Nasser of Egypt, with overwhelming military strength and backed by Russia, sought again to destroy Israel and the Jewish people.

Once again a miracle of God happened and Nasser's army was not just defeated but it was humiliated by the Israeli Defense Force, as were the other Arab armies that attacked Israel. Israel's victory was breathtaking and stunning. Actually, if it were not for God's supernatural deliverance she would have perished!

The same was true of 1973 when, emboldened by Russia, again, and by various allies in the Middle East, Egypt attacked Israel on its holiest day of the year, Yom Kippur. (The great Day of Atonement) The surprise factor was complete and devastating. Even some of Golda Meir's Generals and advisors thought that the "game was over." But they were wrong. Israel snatched victory from the jaws of defeat and survived. If it were not for God's supernatural deliverance Israel would have perished!

Since 1978 and the Camp David Accords peace has characterized the relationship between Israel and Egypt. Ambassadors have been exchanged and even tourism has flourished between the two countries, albeit mainly because Israelis have gone to visit Egypt! This peace, though shaking the Arab world, broadened out in time, to include Jordan. Sadly though, both nations are not ruled democratically thus leaving room for discontent and anger to arise and boil over. They are dictatorships and thus requiring a heavy hand to suppress resistance and opposition. This in turn breeds radicals and these have mushroomed in the form of the Muslim Brotherhood and other groups opposed to the regime. The "main street" is filled with anger. Mubarak's relationship with Israel has been fully exploited thereby turning him into a traitor for some and gathering public sentiment against him.

Now this anger against the regime has erupted and threatens to engulf Jordan and possibly even the Lebanon. Even though the opposition to Mubarak's government is driven, to some degree, by a more secular component of society, it does increasingly include the Muslim Brotherhood whose leaders were in league with Bin Laden when he attacked New York on 9/11. Sadly, all the reports coming out of Egypt confirm our worse fears and that is, that many demonstrators are filled with rage against Israel and therefore, on this question, they agree with the goals and vision of the Muslim Brotherhood. They in turn are in league with Iran and together desire the total destruction of Israel.

It is now a matter of time before President Mubarak falls from power and he will be replaced with populist leaders and a regime that, more than likely, will be more democratic but undoubtedly more hostile to Israel. With the passing of time we could see the Egyptian Embassy closed in Tel Aviv and Egypt returning to its age old position of hostility and antagonism. This in turn means that Israel will truly be encircled by a state sponsored terror network that will have the means to engulf it. If it were not for God's supernatural deliverance Israel will perish!

Though biblical scholars are pondering what all this upheaval means, it is true that the God we serve "watches over Israel day and night". However, the Prophet Ezekiel envisages a day that has yet to arrive, when an alliance of Middle East nations will attempt, one last time, to destroy Israel and remove the Jews finally and forever from the land of promise.

(See Ezekiel 36-39) Egypt will be among them! In Ezekiel's time nation states were not so well defined as we have them today and so thus, when the Prophet speaks of Ethiopia, Put and Libya he is talking about the whole region of Northern Africa. This region, in concert with many other nations, will swoop down upon Israel to destroy her. Israel will be overwhelmed and helpless! But the God of Israel will step in

again and deliver her by amazing judgments that will leave the world astonished. If it were not for God's supernatural deliverance Israel will perish!

All this is to say pray, yes as never before because the picture rapidly developing in the Middle East today is approximating more and more to the picture painted by Ezekiel and indeed the other Prophets including Daniel and Zechariah. At the very least the stage is being set and those who know their God will see it and "do exploits." But, it will take commitment and determination because following after the heart of God will always cost everything. Prayer, Paul reminds us, is hard work. (Colossians 4:12)

Actually, if it were not for God's supernatural deliverance we would all perish because Jesus said, "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy and to escape these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." (Luke 21:36) Makes one think doesn't it?

However, this is not the end of the story. Egypt is destined for glory! She gave shelter to the Christ child and thus preserved his life. (Matthew 2:13-15) She historically attacked the Messianic line but in the end gave protection to the Messiah. God has not forgotten this and thus, in the end, in the Messianic age, she will be united gloriously with Israel and Assyria and become a highway of blessing! (Isaiah 19:18-25) If it were not for the grace of God we would all perish!