

Prophetic Significance of Sinwar's Death on First Day of Sukkot

One year ago, on the last day of the celebratory Feast of Sukkot (Tabernacles), the unthinkable happened, and a living hell was unleashed on the people of Israel. That was Oct. 7, 2023, a day that will live in infamy in the decades to come, a day that has still not ended for the hostages and the families of the victims. One year later, on the first day of Sukkot, Yahya Sinwar, the mastermind of the massacre, was dead.

To add to the poetic justice of the moment, Sinwar, who had eluded the best efforts of combined Israeli and American intelligence for more than one full year, was “accidentally” killed when Israeli troops exchanged gunfire with three Hamas terrorists on Wednesday in Rafah.

One of those terrorists, wounded in his right hand during the gun battle, ran into an empty building, which was then destroyed by Israel Defense Forces tank fire.

It was only afterward, on Thursday, when soldiers investigated the scene and found the bodies of these Hamas fighters, that they made the shocking discovery: This terrorist looked exactly like Sinwar!

The first day of Sukkot began on sundown Wednesday, and as the next day unfolded, the shocking news was being announced worldwide: It was very likely that Sinwar was dead.

By mid-evening Thursday Israeli time, the news was confirmed: it was a DNA match. Sinwar had been eliminated.

From everything I had read in the previous months, it was believed that Sinwar was living in the tunnels, surrounded by

hostages, constantly changing his location to avoid detection.

More recently, reports indicated that he was either hoping for a regional war that could better his chances of survival or that he was resigned to his fate, knowing he would not make it out of Gaza alive. In that case, it was understood, many hostages would die with him.

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There were also unconfirmed reports that he had sometimes dressed as a woman and walked the streets of Gaza, allegedly being sighted or even photographed, but none of that was confirmed.

The idea that he would be out in the open, engaging in a firefight together with other Hamas terrorists is almost unimaginable, yet that's exactly what happened.

It reminded me immediately of the biblical account of the death of Ahab, a wicked Israelite king who went into battle without his royal robes, not wanting to draw attention to himself. "But someone drew his bow at random and hit the king of Israel between the sections of his armor," (1 Kings 22:34a, NIV). Within hours, the king was dead.

The act was seemingly random, but since Ahab was destined to die under divine judgment, the arrow was actually guided by another hand. Is that what happened to Sinwar in Gaza?

Of course, the death of this mass murderer does not bring back any of the Israelis killed on or since Oct. 7, (including the hundreds of IDF soldiers). It does not assuage the pain of these agonizing, life-wrenching losses. Nor does it bring back any of the thousands who have died in Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza.

But without a doubt, it brings a measure of retributive

justice along with, hopefully, a crippling final blow to Hamas.

Not only so, but this is only the tip of the iceberg in Israel's response to the massacre and the subsequent attacks from Hezbollah, Iran and the Houthis.

In recent weeks and months, Israel took out: 1) Hassan Nasrallah, the longtime leader of Hezbollah, along with his replacement and his replacement's replacement; 2) Ismael Haniyeh, the political leader of Hamas, killed in what should have been the safety of his guest house in Tehran; 3) a number of senior Iranian military leaders; 4) thousands of Hezbollah operatives, either wounded or killed by the exploding pagers and walkie-talkies.

This is absolutely extraordinary.

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It is true that Israel was guilty of systemic security failures on Oct. 7, opening the door to the massacre.

It is true that Israel was a nation deeply divided, that some of its military and security leaders had become either proud or complacent, and that some of the most radical elements of Prime Minister Netanyahu's right-wing government were contributing to unrest in Judea and Samaria (the West Bank), further stretching Israel's security forces.

A number of Israel's senior leaders have apologized for some of these failings, as the nation as a whole remains in the throes of war and corporate PTSD.

Yet Sinwar's death is a beacon of hope for the nation and a reminder to the watching world that you pay a dreadful price when you seek to inflict murderous harm on the people of

Israel. (Even as I write these words, Iran is still wondering how Israel will strike back in retaliation for Iran's recent missile bombardment.) The terrorists and their allies are on high alert.

As for biblical prophecy, there is nothing in the Scriptures that specifically predicted the events of Oct. 7, or the death of Sinwar.

But it is fair to ask this question: In light of the timing of the massacre (the last day of Sukkot 2023) and now the announcement of Sinwar's killing (the first day of Sukkot 2024), and in light of the many deadly blows inflicted on terrorist leaders and their followers in recent months, how would biblical authors describe these events? Would they attribute them to natural forces alone?

In my opinion, while the biblical authors would deeply lament the massive losses of Oct. 7, they would certainly recognize the hand of God backing Israel's efforts since then.

I, for my part, would have a hard time differing with that assessment.

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