

Some Open and Raw Reflections on the Murderous Attack on Israel

As news was breaking on Saturday and we were learning about the atrocities that were taking place in Israel, I immediately wrote an article. But even as I was writing, the news kept getting worse.

How could this be happening? It turns out that things were far worse than we could have imagined.

Here are some open, honest, raw reflections on the last 48 hours.

1) The scope of the terrorist attack and the scale of suffering inflicted are unprecedented in the modern State of Israel. This is the worst massacre of Jews on any single day since the Holocaust. Just that alone is mind-numbing.

But when you remember that the size of the Jewish population of Israel is roughly 7 million—meaning about 1/47th the population of America—the numbers become completely devastating.

If we translate this into the proportionate number of deaths in America, we're talking about 9/11, but more than 10 times over.

We're talking about more than 117,000 wounded.

And we're talking about what would be the equivalent of perhaps 5,000 Americans taken hostage into Afghanistan. Who can fathom this?

A husband texted his wife from a kibbutz, saying it was a mess and there was heavy shooting. Minutes later, the daughter

texted, "Mom, it's Daria. Dad has been murdered. Stav too. Help."

Another post, describing the kidnapping of the person's 85-year-old grandmother, read, "This is my grandmother, abducted without any hindrance into Gaza. She helped establish the kibbutz with her own hands, believed in Zionism and loved this country that trusted her. She is now likely abandoned somewhere, suffering in severe pain, without medicine, food or water, dying in fear, all alone."

And then, staggering headlines like this, after we thought the initial death count had been finalized (aside from the critically injured): "About 260 people are believed to have been killed at [a music] festival with new photos being released that show bodies piled high."

Piles of Jewish bodies? What does this sound like?

When I first heard 40 were murdered, my heart sank. Then 100. Then over 250. Now over 700.

Let us not downplay the magnitude of this tragedy.

2) This is when Israel's enemies rejoice. I personally went through the AskDrBrown Facebook page and my X account numerous times on Sunday, deleting and/or blocking vile comment after comment.

Many anti-Semites took exception to this post in particular: "No matter what your position is on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, if you rejoice over the slaughter of Israeli women, children, babies and the elderly, your heart is evil."

In response I was told that it was Israel that was murderous and their sufferings were well deserved. (And, for the record, I was informed that I believed in the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians.)

When my team posted the same comment on Facebook, adding the

graphic of an Israeli flag and a meme saying, "Pray for Israel," the comments got uglier still.

Those were not real Jews living there. They were the synagogue of Satan. And it was the evil Zionists who rejoiced over the slaughter of innocent Palestinian children.

Of course, this was also the time for the false moral equivalencies, as if Israeli troops, doing their best to avoid civilian casualties, could be compared to coldblooded murderers who slaughtered babies and children in cold blood. Or who butchered parents in the presence of their young children. Or who gunned down elderly Israelis—while radical Muslims in Gaza and Iran and elsewhere rejoiced. Please.

Is Israel blameless in its dealing with the Palestinians? Certainly not. Have there been cases of abuse by Israeli soldiers over the years? Absolutely. But these are investigated and called out and tried in court, not celebrated. And nothing Israel has done can compare to the barbaric actions of Hamas.

3) A nation divided against itself cannot stand. An insightful post from Messianic Jewish leaders in Israel (it is worth reading in full) noted that one reason for Hamas's success was that, "The IDF reserves framework has recently been weakened as a result of the boiling internal debates in Israel over the judicial overhaul, and the Israeli Police were similarly weakened due to being used to guard anti-overhaul demonstrators instead of more pressing security needs."

They added, "In a recent interrogation of a Hamas terrorist captured by Israel, he noted a few points: Hamas had planned this coordinated attack for over one year; the anti-government demonstrations in Israel (which divided, distracted and weakened the nation) were a great encouragement to them; they broke through into Israel and were free to murder and kidnap for 5 hours before the IDF responded to them; 1,000 Hamas

terrorists participated in the operation; they made 15 holes in the security fence; the Hamas forces were astounded that IDF forces were not there at the fence to confront the jihadi forces.”

4) Israel is not promised protection. There are certainly verses in the Old Testament which promise divine protection of the people of Israel in the Land, some of which are familiar to Christians (see Isa. 54:17, for example). And who has not heard or read Psalm 121, which includes the words, “indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep” (Ps. 121:4)?

Yet these promises applied in their fullest sense to a righteous nation, and Israel today is not in the Land because of its righteousness (see Ezekiel 36) but because of God’s mercy.

While I do believe that the Lord has protected Israel from disaster countless times—not just throughout history but in particular in the last 75 years back in the Land—there has also been much pain and suffering. (Need I elaborate?)

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So, while it is shocking beyond words to take in what has happened in Israel, we cannot imagine that nothing can touch the Jewish people. That would be naïve. That’s why we should continue to pray for God’s mercy.

5) Radical Islam is demonic. Without a doubt, there are millions of Muslims who are decent human beings and who are shocked by the actions of Hamas, just as they were shocked at the actions of ISIS. They would be the first to say this does not represent their faith. (The question of what is “real Islam” is separate from the point I am making.) Let us acknowledge how demonic radical Islam is without demonizing

all Muslims.

6) While some Christian Zionists can make an idol out of Israel, we should celebrate Christian love for Israel, not disparage it. Indeed, it is Christian love for Israel that has helped wipe away centuries of “Christian” antisemitism. And it is Christian love for Israel that is making a difference at this critical hour and will do so in the days and months ahead. Thank God for healthy Christian Zionism.

7) We must not forget the suffering of the Palestinian people, especially in Gaza. It is true that what Hamas has done is monstrous, parading bodies of murdered Israeli women—stripped naked—before cheering, jeering crowds, among other atrocities. But let us remember that the average citizen of Gaza is also a victim of sorts.

Not only is the Gaza Strip one of the most densely populated regions in the world with much poverty, but with the people electing Hamas in their one and only election (in 2006)—as opposed to having the option of a peace-loving leadership that recognized the Jewish state—Gaza has been isolated by Israel. And when you realize that the median age of Gazan Palestinians is 18 (10 years younger than the worldwide average), you understand that a large percentage of the populace has grown up blaming Israel for all its problems.

State TV brainwashes them, as do their school systems. The people do not realize that hundreds of millions of dollars of support is used for weaponry and tunnels rather than helping fight poverty. (Or, if they understand this, they think it’s justified.) And when Israel launches a counterstrike on Gaza, amounting to more Palestinian suffering, then Israel is viewed as all the more evil.

As Joel Rosenberg wrote in response calling for the evacuation of women, children and the elderly from Gaza, after which Israel would totally destroy it, “Are you crazy? I’m an

Israeli. I want my country to defeat Hamas, reestablish security and liberate our hostages. But genocide is not the answer . . . 2 million Palestinians live in the Gaza Strip. They are also suffering under Hamas' reign of terror."

We must pray for God's mercy for the Palestinians as well.

8) Yes, we are at war. As a Christian leader shared with me on Sunday morning after I preached on God's pain for Israel, "It's not just Israel that is at war, as Netanyahu said. As Christians, we are all at war"—meaning, the spiritual war is intense and real, and while the outward manifestations are clearest in Israel right now, the spiritual conflict is just as real here.

9) Yes, it was a terrible mistake for America to give billions of dollars to Iran. I do not want to make this political, but for good reason, Trump's recent comment has gone viral.

10) I don't know how, but God can bring beauty out of ashes. This is who He is. This is what He does. And just as out of the ashes of the Holocaust the modern nation of Israel was birthed, God can bring something beautiful out of the agony and screams and terror and blood and suffering. Let us lean hard on Him in the days ahead, continuing to pray for His merciful intervention. And may the eyes of all the people in the region find mercy in His Son. {eoa}

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