

Massacre at the ideological heart of Jewish settlements

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The recent massacre at a Jewish seminary and a decision by Israel to build further settlements near Jerusalem have implications with regard to prophecies concerning the time of the end.

IN ZECHARIAH it is written: "And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the LORD [Yahweh] of hosts their God. In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem" (12:5,6).

These words relate to the time when Christ and the saints have marched into Israel and are beginning to destroy those who have come against Jerusalem. The political leaders of Israel, "the governors of Judah", will quickly realise that Divine power is being manifested in Jerusalem. They will put their trust in Yahweh.

Of course, the number of Jews in Jerusalem will have been halved by the invading force, for "half of the city shall go forth into captivity" (14:2).

These and other verses testify to a Jewish presence in Jerusalem and the surrounding area at the time of the end. They also indicate that at that time there will be enmity towards them from the Gentiles. Recent events in Jerusalem are a sign that these factors are developing in preparation for the events spoken of by the prophets.

Massacre

On 6 March 2008 an attack by a gunman killed eight students at the Mercaz Harav yeshiva in Jerusalem. A yeshiva is a seminary where students study the Torah (the Law) and the Talmud (rabbinic discussions). The Mercaz Harav yeshiva was of particular importance in relation to the Jewish settlements in the West Bank. Many of its former students have become rabbis and rabbinical judges in Jewish settlements. Over the years the school has been an important source of ideology and theology for Jewish settlers.

Whatever the intentions of the gunman, his attack struck at the heart of the settler movement. Some of the settlers, such as Yishai Hollander, who speaks on behalf of a leading settler group, the Yesha council, have already promised to build new settlements on the West Bank in response to the massacre.¹

New settlements

A few days after the massacre, it was announced by the Israeli Government that 330 new homes would be built at Givat Ze'ev, a West Bank settlement just to the north of Jerusalem. Such expansion of settlements is not supposed to happen according to the conditions laid down in the so-called roadmap for peace. Israel justifies it on the grounds that these form part of the 750 homes which had been approved in 1999 but which were never built at the time because of a fall in demand following the start of the intifada.

The Palestinians have reacted angrily to the proposal. Saeb Erakat, the chief Palestinian negotiator, said, "This is a provocative action by Israel that demonstrates its intention of further strengthening illegal occupation and colonisation of Palestinian territory".²

Israel said there was no connection between its decision and the atrocity at Mercaz Harav. Perhaps the timing of the proposal was designed to appease the radical settlers and to discourage them from retaliatory action. On the other hand, if the Israeli Government was seeking to maximise support for its proposal then this was clearly an opportune moment.

Conclusion

The atrocity at the seminary and the announcement by the Israeli Government have both served to add momentum to the Jewish settler movement. This is relevant from a prophetic standpoint

1. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2008/03/10/wmeast110.xml>
2. Silver, E. (2008), "Israel defies freeze on illegal settlements", *Independent*, 10 Mar., p. 25.

because the prophets show that there will be Jews both in Jerusalem and in "the mountains of Israel" (Ezek. 38:8) at the time of the end. Furthermore, the tensions that are building up amongst the Palestinians, and also within the

international community, concerning the settlement issue will no doubt contribute to the motivation behind the nations when God "will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle" (Zech. 14:2).