

# What Is Happening in Israel?

## INTRODUCTION

In the past month, many Messianic Jewish leaders and ministries have been sending out urgent prayer requests and calling for prayer over the nation of Israel. The nation is said to be in crisis, and experiencing one of the biggest turmoils that the land has faced since it became a nation in 1948.

In alignment with the 21-day Isaiah 62 fast from May 7 to May 28, Mike Bickle has narrated the current turmoil in Israel as the underlying context for the upcoming fast. <sup>1</sup>Terming this to be a “God moment”, Mike highlights the upcoming fast to be an unprecedented move of God – for 24 hours a day, there will be 100,000 intercessors gathering and collectively praying for Israel in this time of crisis.

We are reminded that more than just focusing on the different events that are taking place in Israel, how we perceive these events in light of knowing God’s overall End Time storyline is key.

Asher Intrater also highlights<sup>2</sup> that the tension that is present in Israel is more than just one of politics and race, but it is also one that is spiritual. While things may seem severe at the moment, Asher reminds us that this is but “a little clash”, compared to the big clashes that we are to see in the End Times.

## A. INTERNAL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC TURMOIL

1. Protests against the government’s proposed judicial reforms have been taking place in various cities in Israel from as early as 7 January 2023. Yet, in recent weeks, the scale and intensity of violence of these protests taking place has been increasing at an alarming rate. In light of this escalation, there have been warnings that a civil war may break out within Israel.
2. At the time of writing, the latest demonstration was on Saturday 18 March, when it was reported that as many as 500,000 demonstrators took to the streets across cities in Israel for the 10th consecutive week, in what the local Haaretz newspaper called “the largest demonstration in the country’s history”.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://youtu.be/dCo2VWbG1SI>

<sup>2</sup> <https://youtu.be/FSHxsaREJrk>

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3. Before delving into what sparked this internal civil strife, we can understand the Israeli political system as context.
    - a. The Israeli political system consists of multiple political parties and the party that gets the most votes (in this case the Likud party headed by Mr Benjamin Netanyahu) will have to add additional parties in order to create a coalition government.
    - b. Out of a total of 120 seats available in the Parliament, the current coalition government, which was formed after 5 unsuccessful election cycles, occupies a small margin of 64 seats. This coalition government that is in power has been said to be the most Right-Wing administration in Israeli history.

4. The complexity stemming from this coalition government is the inclusion of certain Far-Right (which means extreme Right-Wing) political parties that are going along with Mr Benjamin Netanyahu to form this coalition.

Some of these Far-Right parties are ones whom the Israelis, up to recent years, would have never imagined to be a part of the government. These include ones who advocate for Jewish supremacist policies and individuals who have previously been convicted for racist incitement and supporting terrorism by backing Jewish extremist groups.

5. Note here that the Right and Left Wing in the Israeli political system is quite unlike that of the West, and is not to be equated as the Right-Wing = Conservative and Left Wing = Liberal. Hence the political issue here is complex and not as clear cut to simply be about conservative vs liberal values.

Historically, the Right usually advocates for an Israel-dominated state, while the Left stands for negotiating with the Palestinians towards a two-nation state.

6. The people's displeasure towards the government can be said to have been building up due to the repeated election cycles that have bred uncertainty, as well as hesitance towards this new Far-Right coalition government that was elected and formed.

There is now a claim that this new government is trying to overrule or override the democratic nature of the state of Israel, sparking off widespread demonstrations and protests across the nation.

7. The situation was sparked off when in 2023, the recently established Israeli government announced plans to reform Israel's judiciary, which includes limiting the independence and power of the Supreme Court.

8. For context, Israel's government is made up of 3 pillars:

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- a. The legislative branch consists of the 120 members of the Parliament, also known as the Knesset – they enact and repeal laws.
  - b. The executive branch consists of the government officials, the Prime Minister & other ministers – they manage the different ministries according to the laws enacted (including the police force that enforces these laws).
  - c. The judicial branch consists of the Supreme Court and other secular and religious courts for the various religions present in Israel.
9. The proposed judicial reforms have largely split the Israelis into 2 camps – one side is calling for democracy and freedom, while the other is calling for justice reform and to bring the balance back to the government in the Knesset.
  10. A part of this proposed judicial reform pertains to the issue of who appoints the Supreme Court Justices.

The current status quo is for the Supreme Court Justices to appoint themselves, while the proposed reform is looking to reduce this independence that the Supreme Court has, where the government in the Knesset will be the ones to vote and appoint the Supreme Court Justices.

11. Another controversial aspect of this proposed judicial reform is the Override Clause. Simply explained, this is a clause that states that lawmakers (the Knesset) can enact a law in a simple majority, even if the Supreme Court deems the proposed law to be against the Basic Laws of Israel and rejects it. This gives the Knesset the power to override Supreme Court rulings.
  - a. The Basic Laws of Israel are the closest that the nation has to what is called a constitution, and are laws that define the equal and democratic nature of the state of Israel – which includes freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of conscience etc.
  - b. In essence, should the Override Clause be implemented, lawmakers in the Knesset are able to elect a law, even if it contradicts the Basic Laws of Israel, and no one can do anything about it.

12. The proposed reforms have resulted in much division within the nation of Israel.

Supporters for the reforms say that the changes are needed to rein in the Judiciary, which is claimed to be increasingly activist and pushing a partisan agenda.

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Critics see this overhaul as a threat to the democratic nature of the state of Israel, since it removes the checks and balances on the power of the majority that would weaken minority protections, foster corruption and damage the economy.

13. The backlash has been immense and has reached even staunchly establishment groups in Israel:
- a. Israel's influential tech sector staged a work stoppage in protest, raising concerns about the repercussions on the Israeli economy.
  - b. Universities have also gone on strike, with lessons suspended and students and lecturers joining the protest.
  - c. Growing numbers of Israel's military reservists, including members of its most important air force squadron, are also on strike.
    - i. This is an unprecedented step that comes as part of the protest movement.
    - ii. The F-15I pilots who are on strike especially, are a strategically crucial squadron that is critical to Israel's defence and military capabilities. This raises questions about the Israel Defence Forces' operational competence in the immediate short-run.
14. A levelled and objective view ought to be adopted towards the proposed judicial reform, where some proposed reforms are actually practical and beneficial while others pose concerns to varying degrees.

The root of the concern expressed is not primarily targeted at Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, but about who he is in coalition with. In plain words, the political parties that are part of the coalition government who stand for extreme viewpoints.

This is because many times these coalition partners have unequal and weighted responsibility, authority and pull, and can make demands for their own agendas as part of the condition for their support to form the coalition.

The moment a situation does not sit well with these coalition partners, they could withdraw their support and Israel would be back to an election. This is how Israel has had so many election cycles in such a short time.

## **B. HOW THIS COULD AFFECT THE MESSIANIC JEWISH COMMUNITIES**

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1. Complex political issues aside, what concerns the Messianic Jews are the potential issues that might arise as a result of these judicial reforms.
    - a. This is given that the result of such a judicial overhaul would be a form of majoritarian rule, where the welfare of minority groups could potentially be neglected.
  2. Messianic Jews fall under this category of being a “minority group”.
    - a. Today, the privileges that the Israeli government gives to different religious groups are different. For instance, the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish community receives much more privileges (such as free education from birth and unemployment benefits) as compared to other groups and the general population in Israel.
    - b. Such a system has created challenges and difficulties in the journeys of many Jewish people coming to faith and accepting Jesus as Lord and Saviour. This is because accepting Jesus would mean falling out of alignment with the belief system of the government, and consequently a reduction in the privileges that many have been receiving from the time of their birth.
  3. Today, followers of Jesus in Israel experience tremendous amounts of freedom that are considered unparalleled within the region of the Middle East. This includes the ability for them to congregate freely, conduct their activities largely uninterrupted, and legally are able to share the Gospel with adults. (In Israel, it is illegal to share the Gospel with minors)
    - a. In reality, the ministries and their efforts to share the Gospel in Israel do face opposition from different groups and organisations, as many seek to put a stop to their activities and eradicate their presence from Israel.
    - b. With a Far-Right government elected and in power, many of such organisations have increased their efforts of hindrance.
  4. A part of this concern is the proposed Anti-Missionary Law. Note that at the time of writing, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has expressly stated that no such law shall be enacted by the Israeli government (see [here](#)).
  5. The Proposed Anti-Missionary Law
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- a. The proposed legislation states that any religion that is discussed with an adult or a minor of another religion will be viewed as direct missionary activity, and is liable to imprisonment.
  - b. This means that someone who solicits discussions with a person directly, be it physically or digitally by mail or via online platforms, in order to convert him or her, will be liable to the punishment of one-year imprisonment. If the person was a minor, the punishment would be a two-year imprisonment
  - c. The unanswered question and issue of concern here is the question of: **What Constitutes Solicitation?**

Is watching a video about Jesus a form of solicitation? Is talking about Biblical prophecies in the Hebrew Bible that were fulfilled in the New Testament a form of solicitation? Is listening to the New Testament a form of solicitation?

- d. Hence, many see this as a concerning issue pertaining to the freedom of speech and freedom of religion in Israel, one which would have serious implications for the Messianic Jewish ministries in Israel.
- e. This is a bill that has been proposed in the past, and has been proposed many times in Parliament over the past decades but has never become a law.
  - i. Most notably in 1999, this bill actually began a process of legislation, that is until Mr Benjamin Netanyahu single-handedly stopped it and took it off the table. At that time, Mr Benjamin Netanyahu responded and expressed himself to be a friend of the Evangelicals and the International Evangelical Community.
  - ii. Since then, this law has been proposed and put on the table of the government again and again, but it has never passed the preliminary stage.
- f. The situation this time around is different however, because the current Israeli government is a Far-Right government. Coupled with their efforts to push for judicial reform and the Override Clause that removes the checks and balances for the Knesset to enact laws as they desire, there are very few barriers to passing this law.
- g. Hence, many Messianic Jewish ministries have raised awareness of this issue amongst the international Body of Christ amongst the Gentiles and rallied for prayer in light of such possibilities.

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6. We also hear accounts of how the recent tumultuous events have been affecting the Body of Christ in Israel, both the Messianic Jews and the Arab Christians.
    - a. The events that are taking place in the political and economic spheres have affected them, and just as there is a lot of chaos going on in Israel at the moment, this same chaos can be seen within the Body of Christ in Israel.

### **C. THREATS TO THE PEACE AND SAFETY OF ISRAEL**

1. At the moment, there is much hatred and enmity amongst the Jewish people who try to pull one and another down. There is a lot of anger, Israeli-upon-Israeli anger that has sparked some violent behaviours amongst the protestors.
2. This internal division also makes Israel vulnerable to many of the external threats which she faces.

Note that some of these external threats are not new threats, but in light of the internal division that the nation is facing, we see her being in a more vulnerable position than ever.

3. There have been increasing Israeli-Palestinian tension, sparked off by efforts that are deemed to be unprecedented, from the Israeli government to annex the occupied West Bank, where many Palestinians reside.
  - a. These efforts are mostly initiated by the lawmakers in the Knesset, who advocate for Jewish supremacy and who now hold powerful ministerial roles and are making new moves towards annexation.
  - b. Such moves incited violence in those regions and have been met with much resistance, contributing to the cause behind the protests that we are seeing today.
4. There have also been reports of nations in the Middle East region increasingly arming themselves, be it in building their nuclear weapons or sending their conveys and weaponry into nations directly around Israel.
  - a. While such threats have always been present for the nation, this situation is made worse by the ongoing strikes that are taking place in the Israel Defence Forces.

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- b. With the Israel Defence Forces being based on the reservist troops, the situation now is alarming as many who disagree with the judicial reforms are choosing to not serve in the military and not volunteer for their reserve duties.

#### **D. THE SILVER LINING IN THIS SITUATION**

1. Despite the turmoil that the nation is facing, Messianic Jewish ministries have also shared the bright side of this situation.
2. Similar to what they saw during COVID-19, when there is a crisis and an existential situation, the people start to lift their eyes and look to God, and hence there is also increased interest in the Gospel.

#### **E. PRAYER POINTERS**

1. Pray for Israel to be directed to the God of Israel for answers in the midst of the present crisis. (Ps 121, Ps 23 – Jehovah Raah, Jehovah Nissi)
  2. Praying for the salvation of souls in Israel, for the Jews to know Yeshua and turn to Him as their Messiah. (Rom. 10:1)
  3. Praying for the peace for Jerusalem (within her walls, and in her heart, from the acknowledgement of Yeshua as their Saviour). (Ps 122; Numbers 6:24-26)
  4. Pray for strength and grace upon the Messianic Jews, to overcome the increasing pressures in the natural and darkness in the spiritual. (Col. 1:11)
  5. In light of the Jeremiah 23:18 and Psalm 23 Table of the Lord moment, pray for the Messianic Jews to hear the call and be directed to His table to receive His divine strategies and to know Yahweh as their God. (2 Thes. 3:1, 3, 5)
  6. Pray for the End-Time Prayer movement to stand with and pray for Israel. (2 Thes. 1:11-12)
    - a. In line with the start of the 7 years of Preparation for the Times, we see the urgency for the prayer movement for Israel to arise.
    - b. In light of this being the “hinge moment”, to know the necessity of a prayerful response that is required in this time that can lead to a glorious shift for Israel.
  7. Contend for the Joel 2:28-32 outpouring of the Spirit
    - a. For Israel: the Acts 2 outpouring, where many would come to know Yeshua. (Jude 3, Ps. 80:14)
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- b. For Gentiles believers: to provoke Israel to jealousy and unto her turning to Yeshua. (Isa. 63.15; Isa. 64:1)
- 8. Pray for voices to arise, directing and instructing the Jewish people to Yeshua as the Answer in this time of trouble. (2 Thes. 3.1, 5)
  - a. For voices to arise to direct the Jewish people to His end time narrative

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## References

Mike Bickle

- <https://youtu.be/dCo2VWbG1SI>

Asher Intrater, Tikkun Global

- <https://youtu.be/FSHxsaREJRk>

Dr Erez Soref, One for Israel Ministry

- [https://youtu.be/x7SquGc1\\_dl](https://youtu.be/x7SquGc1_dl)
- <https://youtu.be/OSwxykrWobk>

General News articles:

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- <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/mar/15/israeli-president-civil-war-is-within-touching-distance>
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