

Light Brings Salt

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Iron Range Bible Church

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MISSILES & THE MESSIAH MAKING NEWS

Interesting times we live in.

By Joel C. Rosenberg

(Washington, D.C., July 11, 2008) -- Talk of missiles and the Messiah are making big news in Israel, Iran, and the U.S. in recent days. It's a curious combination, to be sure. But numerous high-profile stories and television programs on both topics are stirring interest and controversy among millions in three countries that could not be more different. The Messiah stories are particularly interesting to me. Iran, as I mentioned the other day, is running a new documentary TV series on Jewish, Christian and Islamic eschatology (End Times theology), consistent with President Ahmadinejad's ongoing call for the Muslim world to prepare for the "imminent" arrival of the Islamic Messiah, known as the Mahdi. The Israeli archaeological community, meanwhile, is currently abuzz over the discovery of an ancient stone tablet dated not long before the birth of Jesus that strongly suggests that religious Jews of the day were expecting the coming of a Messiah who would suffer, die, and be resurrected three days later. Most Rabbis and other Jewish scholars have long argued that the death and resurrection of a Jewish Messiah was a "Christian" invention, not part of long-established Jewish thought or Biblical teaching. But a front-page story in Haaretz, a leading Israeli newspaper, just a few days ago has a lot of people asking: Are Jews really supposed to believe their Messiah will actually die and rise again, and was this really Orthodox religious thinking before the time of Jesus?

That said, let's actually start with the missile stories. Tensions are growing -- as are oil prices -- after Iran tested more medium- to long-range ballistic missiles overnight. Each of the missiles

were capable of reaching Israel, all U.S. bases in the region, all of the major oil fields and facilities in the epicenter, and even cities in southern Europe. Each were also capable, experts believe, of carrying nuclear warheads.

Particularly disturbing to me was this story out of Israel. "The IAEA's latest report of Iranian nuclear capabilities noted several covert developments 'which should be cause for some concern': Developments of nuclear detonators, high-end experiments involving conventional explosives made to accelerate nuclear warheads' fission and underground nuclear testing facilities. The most disconcerting find, however was that of computer files suggesting Iran already possesses - and may have already tested - a full-fledged nuclear warhead. To make matters worse, the Swiss authorities have recently discovered even more computer files suggesting Abd al-Kader Khan did more than draw plans for a simple nuclear warhead - he may have also provided the Iranians with the blueprints for a new, extremely small nuclear warhead, which can be installed atop ballistic missiles."

Consider these other headlines:

- * Iran Press Service: In Direct Warning to Israel, Iran Test-Fired Long-Range Missile
- * Islamic Republic News Agency: President Ahmadinejad: US, Israel not dare attack Iran
- * AP: Iran test-fires more missiles in Persian Gulf
- * Times of London: Iran ready to strike at Israel's nuclear heart: Iran has moved ballistic missiles into launch positions, with Israel's Dimona nuclear plant among the possible targets
- * AP: Israeli defense minister Barak hints at Israel's readiness to strike Iran
- * AP: Rice warns Iran that US will defend Israel
- * MEMRI: Iran in Preparations, Deployment to Withstand Possible Attack by West

There's no question now that Tehran, Jerusalem and Washington are also actively preparing for the possibility of a major regional war this fall. But that's not all. A Wall Street Journal editorial yesterday morning on "Iran's Missile Threat" raises another disturbing scenario, one seemingly ripped right out of my latest thriller, Dead Heat.

"Yesterday's tests offered no big surprises about Iran's missile technology, but they are a useful reminder of just how real the Iranian threat is - and how rapidly it is growing," observed the Journal. "One of the missiles tested was the latest update of the Shahab-3, which has a range of about 1,250 miles. Replace the payload with a lighter one - say, a nuclear warhead - and the range gains 1,000 miles. Add a booster and the range can be extended even farther. North Korea did just that with its Taepodong missile - technology that it passed along to Iran. U.S. intelligence estimates that Iran will have a ballistic missile capable of reaching New York or Washington by about 2015. Iran may already have the capability to target the U.S. with a short-range missile by launching it from a freighter off the East Coast. A few years ago it was observed practicing the launch of Scuds from a barge in the Caspian Sea. This would be especially troubling if Tehran is developing EMP - electromagnetic pulse - technology. A nuclear weapon detonated a hundred miles over U.S. territory would create an electromagnetic pulse that would virtually shut down the U.S. economy by destroying electronic circuits on the ground. William Graham, head of a Congressional commission to assess the EMP threat, testifies before the House Armed Services Committee this morning. We hope someone asks him about Iran."

All the more reason to move forward -- rapidly -- with a robust missile defense program for the U.S., Israel and Europe, regardless of what the Russians say.

Now, let's turn to the Messiah stories. Through TV programs like "The Secret of Armageddon," the Iranian government continues trying to prepare people for what Ahmadinejad sees as the increasingly "imminent" coming of the Islamic Messiah. I don't begrudge them that, per se. I also believe we are living in the last days. I believe the Messiah is coming. And I believe we all need to live differently in light of these truths.

The problem is that while Jesus, the Apostles and

all Biblical eschatology teaches us to love our neighbors and our enemies in the End Times -- and share the good news of God's love and salvation for all who will listen and respond -- Shia Islamic eschatology teaches just the opposite. The way to hasten the Mahdi's appearance or arrival on earth, Shia scholars teach, is to create chaos and carnage on the planet and kill tens of millions of people. They believe that annihilating Judeo-Christian civilization as we know it and sending the world goes up in flames will then trigger the arrival of the Mahdi who will bring righteousness, justice and peace and create a worldwide Islamic empire.

Of course, it's one thing to believe in such horrifying theology. It's another thing to run a country based on it. Yet that is exactly what is happening in Iran today. Such Shia eschatology is driving Iranian foreign policy. What's more, it is driving the Iranian regime's feverish bid to build, buy or steal nuclear weapons and the missiles capable of delivering them to U.S. and Israeli targets. Such genocidal zealots cannot be successfully negotiated with or deterred. That's what is so critical for Washington and our allies to understand. Ahmadinejad -- and, more importantly, the Ayatollah Khamenei -- don't want to be stopped. They believe they are on a God-given mission to bring about the end of the world, and they are eager and passionate about getting the job done as quickly as possible.

Meanwhile, a far healthier discussion is going on right now in Israel. Many religious Jews also believe global events are lining up to usher in the coming of the Messiah. Of course, they believe He will be arriving for the first time, not the second time, as Christians believe. But now the very nature of who the Messiah is and what He will do when He arrives is being debated in a whole new way. Consider these stories (and I strongly encourage you to read each thoroughly):

- * Haaretz (a leading Israeli daily newspaper): Dead Sea tablet suggests Jewish resurrection imagery pre-dates Jesus
- * New York Times: Ancient Tablet Ignites Debate on Messiah and Resurrection
- * Agence France Presse: Mystery tablet could redefine Jewish-Christian links
- * The Jewish Journal: Was Jesus' resurrection culturally expected?

Israeli Professor Israel Knohl of The Hebrew

University of Jerusalem finds himself in the spotlight for a presentation he is giving this week at a major conference on the 60th anniversary of discovering the Dead Sea Scrolls. His lecture is entitled, "The Gabriel Revelation and the Birth of Christianity," and it is creating a whole lot of buzz.

"The first part [of the ancient tablet that he has been studying] describes an eschatological war," Knohl explains. "The nations of the world besiege Jerusalem, and the residents are expelled from the city in groups. This description is followed by a passage in which God sends 'my servant David' to ask...the Messiah Son of Joseph to deliver a 'sign.' From the context, it appears that this sign heralds the coming redemption. The second part of the Gabriel Revelation focuses on death and resurrection - and the blood of the slain. The last paragraph cites the words of the Archangel Gabriel who commands a person to return to life after three days: 'By three days, live.' In my lecture I will deal with the possible connection between the figure of Ephraim, the Messiah Son of Joseph, and the image of Jesus in the New Testament. I will also explore the possible link between the resurrection 'by three days' commanded by Gabriel in the Gabriel Revelation and the resurrection of Jesus 'on the third day.'"

"Moshe Idel, a professor of Jewish thought at Hebrew University, said that given the way every tiny fragment from that era yielded scores of articles and books, 'Gabriel's Revelation' and Mr. Knohl's analysis deserved serious attention," reports the New York Times. "Here we have a real stone with a real text," he said. "This is truly significant."

What Knohl finds most significant is "the fact that [the writings on the stone tablet] strongly suggested that a savior who died and rose after three days was an established concept at the time of Jesus. He notes that in the Gospels, Jesus makes numerous predictions of his suffering and New Testament scholars say such predictions must have been written in by later followers because there was no such idea present in his day. But there was, he said, and 'Gabriel's Revelation' shows it."

"His mission is that he has to be put to death by the Romans to suffer so his blood will be the sign for redemption to come," Mr. Knohl said. "This is the sign of the son of Joseph. This is the conscious view of Jesus himself....To shed blood...to bring

redemption to Israel."

Two trends worth watching.

G-8, CO2 And The Garden Of Eden

By INVESTOR'S BUSINESS DAILY

Posted Tuesday, July 08, 2008

Climate Change: A study on the impact of rising CO2 levels finds a future world of thriving agriculture and lush vegetation. Carbon dioxide, the gas some see as a threat, is indeed the key to life on Earth.

Even as the G-8 Summit announced plans to cut greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2050, researchers at the Johann Heinrich von Theunen Institute in Germany find the rise in carbon dioxide levels may in fact be a boon to plant life on Earth.

The Theunen Institute, which has been monitoring the phenomenon since 1999, trained CO2 jets on plants, raising CO2 concentrations in the air around them to 550 parts per million (ppm), significantly higher than today's levels.

The researchers announced on Tuesday that such increased exposure to carbon dioxide appears to boost crop yields.

"Output increased by about 10% for barley, beets and wheat" when the plants were exposed to the higher levels, according to the Institute's Hans-Joachim Weigel.

That the Earth is getting greener due to higher CO2 levels was confirmed recently by satellite data analyzed by scientists Steven Running of the University of Montana and Ramakrishna Nemani of NASA. They found that over a period of almost two decades, the earth's vegetation increased by a whopping 6.2%.

"Higher CO2 enables plants to grow faster and larger and to live in drier climates," explained Lawrence Solomon in a June 7 article on the Running/Nemani findings in Canada's Financial Post.

"Plants provide food for animals, which are thereby also enhanced. The extent and diversity of plant and animal life have both increased substantially during the past half-century."

Carbon dioxide has become the poster child for global warming advocates who constantly claim it's the major greenhouse gas. According to Al Gore, each time you exhale while reading this editorial, you have contributed to global warming.

Carbon dioxide is in fact not a pollutant. Rather, it is the basis of all plant, and therefore all animal, life on Earth. So says Dr. Robert Balling, director of the Office of Climatology at Arizona State University, who notes that "carbon dioxide concentrations were much higher in the past, millions of years ago, when plants evolved around the world."

"When carbon dioxide levels increase, plants grow faster, bigger, more resistant to any number of stresses, and far more efficient in their use of water," Balling says. Hardly the scorched Earth scenario painted by global warm-mongers.

As atmospheric CO2 levels consistently have been increasing, global mean temperatures have not kept pace. Warming has not been constant. In fact, it has been interrupted periodically by — dare we say it? — global cooling, and seems to have stopped entirely in 1998.

These are not the kind of temperature fluctuations you'd expect in the face of steadily increasing CO2 emissions, if CO2 was the main culprit.

Richard Lindzen, of the Alfred P. Sloan Professor of Atmospheric Science at MIT, notes that global mean temperatures have risen about 1 degree Fahrenheit over the past century, rising significantly between 1919 and 1940, declining between 1940 and the early 1970s, rising again, and remaining essentially flat since 1998.

As Solomon notes, CO2 levels were five to 10 times higher when dinosaurs roamed the Earth on a fertile planet where lush vegetation sustained those immense beasts. The Earth is cooler now than then, and cooler than it was during the Medieval Warming Period.

In that era, the climate was so warm that Vikings settled Greenland and grew crops there for centuries. When Eric the Red brought settlers to Greenland in 986, the climate supported the Viking way of life based upon cattle, hay, grain and herring for the next 300 years. Was it man-made pollution that allowed 300 years of Nordic settlement in Greenland? We don't think so.

While others worry about the demise of the planet, we're going to sit down and enjoy a nice green salad and take a deep breath.

The Lazarus Rat

1 Corinthians 8:2

And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.

According to evolutionists, the early family of mammals called Diatomyidae, has been extinct for eleven million years. Of course, as creationists, we do not accept this dating. This Diatomyidae family included rat-like creatures with long skulls, a furry tail and rounded ears.

Then, in 1996, a wildlife-survey team bought some strange looking animals in a meat market in Laos. This led to the discovery of living Laotian rock rats. These animals were placed into a family that includes porcupines and guinea pigs. Others argued that it belonged to a new family. The debate sparked a more detailed look at its DNA and bone structure by researchers in five countries. The results ruled out any possibility that the rats were related to guinea pigs. But the rock rat's characteristic long skull, furred tail and round ears seem to settle the matter. The Diatomyidae are not extinct and the Laotian rock rat is indeed a member of this family. This discovery of thought-to-be extinct families happens frequently enough that such families are called Lazarus taxon or, more popularly, living fossils.

So, when evolutionists proclaim that this or that creature or family has been extinct for millions of years, it takes only one living specimen to disprove it. Furthermore, many creatures do not appear in the recent fossil record and this puts the entire interpretation into question.