

Perspective

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Can a Nation Repent?

As we look at the U.S.-Iran War, Iran has essentially been flattened by missiles and bombing, which has inflicted heavy damage on its military infrastructure and military equipment. Independent analysts and institutions describe “extensive damage” to Iran’s forces, their Navy, Air Force, and nuclear-related infrastructure. The United States pounds them with massive strikes, and there seems to be a hint they want to make a deal, but each time they relent and say, “We will not make a deal with the Americans.” The Iranians are disturbingly stubborn and not willing to wave the white flag of surrender. Then again, if we consider history, the Vietnam War lasted 19 years and 5 months, the U.S. war with Somalia lasted for 19 and a half years, and the war in Afghanistan lasted for 19 years and ten months. The 2026 US-Iran war — code-named *Operation Epic Fury* — began on Feb 28, 2026, when joint U.S. and Israeli strikes hit Iranian military and nuclear installations. The war has been going on for over four months. However long it continues to go on, is Iran too stubborn to ever change? Will Iran be brought to her knees and repent of being a rogue, terrorist nation? Can nations repent?

Iran’s leaders are not like their ancient counterparts during the time of Esther

The Book of Esther is set during the reign of King Ahasuerus (Xerxes I) of Persia. Haman, an advisor to the king, plots to annihilate the Jewish people throughout the Persian Empire. Esther's cousin, Mordecai, refuses to bow to Haman, inciting Haman's wrath against the Jews. This narrative is found in Esther chapters 4 through 8. Esther instructed the Jews to fast before she appealed to the king: *“Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so, I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!”* (Esther 4:6)

Queen Esther then made a plea to the king to save the Jews from a plot to annihilate them orchestrated by Haman. Her courageous actions ultimately led to the Jews' survival and the establishment of the festival of Purim (Esther 9:18-32).

King Ahasuerus was a reasonable man, willing to listen, and the Jews were saved as a result. The evil Haman who wanted to kill the Jews, was like the Shia Muslim Iranian hardliners who want to destroy Israel and push the Jews in the Mediterranean Sea. They cry out today, “Death to America, and Israel.!”

Iran’s clerical leaders, the mullahs, believe they are the temporary fill-ins until a coming messianic imam returns. This is what is stated in the official state ideology of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mojtaba Khamenei is a hard-line Shia Muslim with this mentality. The Iranian regime, Shiite militias, and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard have executed tens of thousands of their own people, to simply remain in power. However, it is more than that; it is about being the “architects of Armageddon.” Iran is a nation where its leaders believe their primary mission isn’t proper governance, but manufacturing a means to the end of the world.

Iran’s media attributed a first wartime message to Mojtaba Khamenei, which was reported as being read on Iranian state TV rather than shown in person. In it, he vowed to keep the Strait of Hormuz “closed”/blocked and to continue attacks on U.S. bases in the region. The remarks also included calls for Gulf countries to shut down U.S. bases, and he framed the campaign as something Iran must continue in response to deaths (“martyrs”).

It is not likely Iran will ever change as a nation, unless there is a complete regime change. Interestingly, their neighbor Iraq became a democracy. Iraq is considered a fledgling democracy after the fall of former President Saddam Hussein, having established a federal parliamentary system with regular elections since 2005. Iraq tends to be a little more authoritarian, but it has remained a democracy for over twenty years.

All nations are accountable to God

God does not just hold Israel accountable, but He judges all nations—even those who do not recognize Him. The Bible gives several examples showing no nation is exempt, such as the city of Nineveh, which repented at the preaching of Jonah: *“So, the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published*

throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, 'Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?' Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it." (Jonah 3:5-10).

This collective act of humility and turning from wrongdoing led to God's mercy, sparing the city filled with men, women and children from destruction. God does not expect nations to be converted, but to honor God and have a basic morality, humility, and not be a cruel people. God punished Assyria and Babylon for their cruelties done to Israel and Judah during their captivities. God decrees in Daniel 4:17, *"This decision is by the decree of the watchers, and the sentence by the word of the holy ones, in order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men."*

Israel and Judah did not escape judgement --- they didn't repent

The concept of national repentance is deeply rooted in the Bible. One of the clearest biblical examples of Israel repenting is found in the Book of Judges; the nation repeatedly turned away from God, worshipped idols, and suffered oppression. When the Israelites cried out to the Lord for help, He responded by sending a judge to deliver them: *"And when the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed them and harassed them. And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them. They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way."* (Judges 2:18-19)

This vicious cycle of sin, judgment, repentance, and deliverance was a recurring theme in Israel's history. Another example is found in Deuteronomy 4:29; Moses tells the Israelites, *"But if from there you will seek the LORD your God, you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul."* This scripture illustrates how God intervened to save and restore them when they cried out to Him from the heart.

After Judah returned from the Babylonian captivity, which is recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah, they went through a national act of repentance. The people confessed their sins, reestablished right worship, and followed the covenant with God, which led to God's blessing and restoration.

Will the United States, Britain, Australia, New Zealand and the west repent?

The first step to repentance for a nation is to acknowledge national and personal sins before the great God of heaven. Unfortunately, one great sin many have committed is they have forgotten God. There must be a revival to return to God and apply what the Bible says. In Jeremiah 3:12, God implores us, *"Return, backsliding Israel," says the Lord; 'I will not cause My anger to fall on you. For I am merciful,' says the Lord; 'I will not remain angry forever...'"*

II Chronicles 7:14 emphasizes the conditional nature of God's divine blessing on us: *"If My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land"*.

This verse shows us national repentance involves humility, prayer, and a sincere return to righteousness.

The Bible presents national repentance as a means to avert judgment and receive healing. Prophets repeatedly warned Israel and Judah that failure to repent would lead to calamity, while sincere repentance brought restoration and divine favor.

A nation can indeed repent, but it requires a collective acknowledgment of wrongdoing, sincere humility, and a commitment to change. Biblical examples demonstrate when a nation turns from its sins and seeks God, it can experience forgiveness, healing and restoration, highlighting the transformative power of a national repentance.