

The War with Hamas: Distinguishing Between Good and Evil

In this the third week since Israel launched its invasion of Hamas-controlled Gaza in response to the brutal sadistic massacre that occurred 4 weeks ago, moral clarity has already become blurred.

Many of us wonder how any decent person fails to distinguish between a terrorist totalitarian organization bent on destroying Israel, who seeks to kill every Jew and Israeli, an organization supported by Iran which has zero tolerance for gays, women's rights, free expression and the values of western society and a modern, democratic society which sends aid around the world whenever disaster strikes, which has given the world so much, whose citizens are refugees from persecution, who has received more Nobel prizes per capita than Germany, the United States and France, and whose people just want to live in peace.

It is a world gone mad.

In the month since the attack we have already gone through several phases. First, there was the utter horror, shock and universal revulsion over what happened. Then, as Israel planned its response, there was anxiety and concern about what would happen, coupled with sympathy for what Israel experienced. And now that Israel has launched its response, as predicted and expected, the initial sympathy has eroded and has been replaced by an explosion of vicious anti-Semitic venom.

While Israel wages a war for its survival, as Natan Sharansky notes, "Instead of unanimous condemnation, what we have heard from college campuses is the full justification of this pogrom – the worst in modern memory – in statements by campus organizations and in demonstrations celebrating Hamas. According to the worldview that guides these deplorable responses, voiced repeatedly by students and their professors, Israel must be blamed for everything because fighting against the Zionist oppressor is how the worldwide struggle against colonialism begins."

The misguided, naïve, manipulated opponents of Israel are ignorant of basic facts. What they do not realize is that Hamas' war is a war against the Jews, all Jews, without distinction to our level of observance or practice or ideology. There is a possibility, and I am not sure which is worse, that perhaps they do realize that it is a war against the Jews, and nevertheless support Hamas. In reality though, Israel is fighting not just for itself and on behalf of Jews. Nor does it fight just to eradicate the terror organization bent on its destruction. Israel is fighting much more than that. It is in the bulwark of fighting to preserve the very ideals upon which western civilization is based.

Fighting a war it neither initiated nor sought, Israel's President, Isaac Herzog put it best when he wrote in an OpEd in *The New York Times*, "This is not a battle between Jews and Muslims. And it

is not just between Israel and Hamas. It is between those who adhere to norms of humanity and those practicing a barbarism that has no place in the modern world.”

The phase we are currently in the Hamas terrorists who attacked Israeli homes and families had no qualms about burning babies. They tortured children, raped women and destroyed peace-loving communities. They were so proud of their deeds that they made sure to capture them on video and even broadcast them live. These videos will forever remain a stain on those Palestinians and their supporters who celebrated that day and a testament to the depravity of the terrorists and of the ideas that inspired them.”

History has taught us that foul ideologies often find the Jewish people first — but tend not to stop there. We find ourselves on the front lines of this battle, but all nations face this threat, and they must understand that they could be next.”

Indeed, Israel is fighting for the values of all of western society. The people who are marching today do so thinking that they are marching on behalf of the oppressed, on behalf of victims of colonizers. They are useful idiots, for they do not realize they are the first whose rights would be trampled were Hamas to be victorious. The feminists, gay rights activists and others would be the first victims of Hamas if they were in Gaza. If the left really cared about morality, they would speak up on behalf the hostages being held against their will. Instead, they tear down signs with pictures of the captives – denying the hostages the dignity of being acknowledged.

If those who call for a ceasefire really cared about the loss of innocent lives, or Arab lives, they would have been in the streets protesting and calling attention to the 500 – 600,000 Arabs killed in Syria’s war, and the thousands of Palestinians killed by Bashar Assad’s troops. As Michael Oren has pointed out, the only time leftists care about the loss of Arab or Palestinian lives is when it comes at the hands of Israel.

They justify the massacre as resistance to “occupation.” But Gaza is not occupied, and there are no Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip, nor in the area they attacked. The only Israelis in Gaza are those who were kidnapped and are being held against their will.

As we see scenes of the results of Israel’s campaign in Gaza, of the buildings that have been targeted and the Palestinian victims, keep in mind we were not privy to images coming out of Masul or Afghanistan or Yemen, or other war-torn areas. Let us not forget when we see the images of destruction that it was Hamas (as directed by Iran, who uses Hamas as its proxy) who chose when, where and how to launch the latest round of violence. That it is Hamas that chooses to embed its operations and store its weapons in civilian areas. That Hamas chose to use the tens of billions it has received in foreign aid to build tunnels and to funnel money into the bank accounts of its leaders. Hamas chose to deliberately build its command center under hospitals. And it is Hamas that blocks its citizens from heeding the warnings issued by Israel from leaving

the areas it intends to target. Hamas celebrates death. It is intent upon killing Jews, and for propaganda purposes, having Palestinians killed as well.

And by the way, it is appropriate to be skeptical about the information coming out of Hamas controlled Gaza strip and the health agencies and reporters they control and intimidate. I have seen videos of body bags of Palestinians supposedly killed that mysteriously move. Gaza with its seafont could have become prosperous and a model area, just as Singapore and Hong Kong transformed themselves from impoverished cities to thriving economic powerhouses.

In today's torah portion we read about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorah because of the evil of the society. When ten righteous people could not be found, God realized that all were complicit in the evil, and that there was no choice but to destroy the city. In a world gone mad, which cannot distinguish between good and evil, I conclude with a story from the midrash about a man who went up and down the streets of Sodom condemning the sinfulness and evil ways of its citizens. Someone mocked him and said, "Old man, don't you realize you cannot change them." He replied, "Long ago I gave up hope of being able to change them. Now I continue to speak out against them to make sure they do not change me."

Let us continue to speak out for what is right and remind the importance of distinguishing between good and evil.

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