

Who is right to hate us?

by: Rabbi Jeremy Rosen

The Palestinian conflict and the way it is perceived throughout Europe and in parts of the USA has put paid to this false messiah of normality once and for all. Even normal, secular, music-loving, technologically self-sufficient Jews are regarded as evil, in league with the devil.

No humane human being can possibly be immune to children dying. But hold on. Where are most children being killed in the world at this moment and by whom? In Syria, Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Sudan, Chechnya, China, Indonesia, and Myanmar—Muslim children all, hundreds of thousands in recent years. Yet there have been no calls for boycotts, no calls to kill the murderers, no Human Rights condemnations.

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If I fire a rocket aimed at a human civilian target, and it fails to explode or is intercepted, am I not still guilty of intent? And if the world thinks that deserves no condemnation, is not the world crazy or sick?

I address this to my Muslim friends. If we were to concede that Israel was entirely to blame for the collapse of the peace talks, was wrong to attack Gaza, why can we not agree that Gaza was wrong to attack Israel? And if Israel was wrong to attack areas where there were civilians, was not Hamas wrong to fire rockets from schools, hospitals, and homes? Are we going to use population density as an argument for not hitting back if attacked? Who previously ever did? There is no objectivity here. Because Jews are whipping boys for any sick culture in decline, for any dictator clinging to power who needs a scapegoat, or for politicians desperate for votes. Israel, Zionism is now an excuse for attacking Jews, not for accepting them. We are heavily outnumbered. But so what?

In a way we must be grateful to Hamas for clarifying things. The fact is that there is no practical difference between most Zionists and most Jews anymore. "Kill the Jews" is now acceptable language across the globe. The myth of being anti-Zionist but not anti-Jewish is blown. And, yes, there always have been Jews who were anti-Jew. There were Jews who supported Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini. There are some deluded religious Jews who think they will have a better life under the Hezbollah or Iran. There are Jews who believe in other religions. Jews support every political party across the spectrum. Jews are "the same as everyone else, only more so". But nothing reinforces us Jews more than a sense that we are being treated unjustly. This whole issue, this whole scenario, is an issue of loyalty.

Zionism, or nationalism, or just wanting a refuge from hatred has united Jews more than any other ideology. We have always been a divided, fractious people. We certainly are not agreed today about the State of Israel, its political leadership, or its direction. We are divided socially between rich and poor, between countries of origin, and degrees of observance. Yet for all

that, the vast majority want a homeland and are willing either to fight for it or support it.

So if we rally round our own, why would we not expect most Muslims to rally round other Muslims and care about their suffering, even if their own political leaders are responsible for it? If we try to ignore our own fanatics, why shouldn't they? Is this conflict a matter of logic? No, it's a matter of conflicting loyalties. Why are we so surprised? Except that they seem to care less about Muslims killing Muslims than they do about Jews killing Muslims, not for ideology, just in self defense.

I hate seeing children suffer. I hate seeing anyone killed. No matter what the cause. I cannot even bear to watch casualties on TV. I find war horrific, terrible, and to be avoided at almost all costs. But not at all costs. If I fear an existential threat (just imagine the toll if we had not had the Dome), my religion demands of me I respond, and my loyalty to my people demands of me I support them. If "the world" is against my people, why wouldn't I want to support them? No one else will. All the more so if the world of our opponents is one filled with barbaric, oppressive extremism. Why shouldn't one want reassurances and demilitarization before laying down one's guard?

And who is refusing ceasefire extensions? Hamas. Because the only way they have of garnering support and money is by exaggerating their suffering. The only way the millionaire political leadership, living underground in its luxury shelters, has of growing richer on the backs and bodies of its own populace is by showing more fake photos of tragedies it has created for its own ends.

There are two kinds of enmity: the enmity of a cause one is passionately committed to, and the enmity of illogical prejudice. The first is understandable. The second is dishonest.

Yet my argument is not with Muslims who support Muslims. Of course they want what they want, and they will not give up before they get it any more than Israel will. I understand why Muslims want the Jews out of the Middle East, out of Dar al-Islam.

I can understand those who accuse Israel of not doing more for peace. But I cannot sympathize with neo-Nazis or with Jews who want to see the end of a secure homeland, or with anyone else who does. Neither do I understand a "turn the other cheek" mentality that says Israel should just suffer and bear bombs and missiles regardless. And I certainly don't understand how liberal intellectuals can ally themselves with fundamentalists who would deny freedom and choice to any people unfortunate enough to be ruled by them.

Yet this irrational hatred is, ironically, beneficial, for it forces us to think about priorities and make choices. It actually helps us. The more we are attacked, demeaned, or delegitimized, the more we identify and the stronger we get. We are "a nation that dwells alone". We are outliers. And it is precisely because we neither accept other religious myths nor abandon our individuality that we find ourselves so unpopular. But rather survival than

popularity. If we few millions and our allies do not stand up for us, who will?

I hear the mantra that young American Jews no longer support Israel. I am not surprised. They have no experience of the helplessness in the face of Nazis and world abandonment. Most of them are Jewishly ignorant and uncommitted. Of course they do not stand by a Jewish homeland. They are who they are. But you go anywhere in the US to religious communities and schools and you will see dynamic committed support, if anything too blind. Because it is not based on anything but passionate loyalty. We have always relied on quality not quantity.

But I know full well that there is another truth. Peace comes only when both sides want it badly enough. If you have two punch-drunk boxers, only the referee can separate them. It seems there is no referee anyone trusts. I pray for peace, but sadly at this moment I neither trust the process nor the players. We are still only in the early rounds. This is a long battle. To adapt an old adage, a Chinese Emperor was once asked if he would like to be loved by all his subjects. He replied "No! Loved by the good ones, but hated by the bad ones." It depends on which side you are on. I know where I stand.