

After The Jerusalem Massacre: Islamic “Martyrs” and Islamic “Peace”

by Louis René Beres (December 2014)

“Blessed be your quality weapons, the wheels of your cars, your axes and kitchen knives, because they are being used according to Allah’s will. We are the soldiers of Allah.”

– Sultan Abu Al-Einein, Abbas Senior Advisor and Member, Fatah Central Committee, November 19, 2014

To be sure, there was nothing subtle or coincidental about the latest Palestinian-inflicted carnage in a Jerusalem synagogue. Once again, the ritualistic attack with knives and axes was an example of crude religious sacrifice masquerading as revolutionary terror. Yet again, the Islamist perpetrators were animated by the belief that in shedding “infidel” blood “according to Allah’s will,” their homicidal mission would express individually sacred acts of redemption. Above all, the murderers sought to overcome their own dreaded mortality, lasciviously, by dispatching defenseless and praying Jews, to an unspeakable death.

In reality, Hamas terrorists, and their many kindred Palestinian comrades in arms, are not indifferent to dying. On the contrary, their mock-heroic posturing is simply pretense, a grotesque misrepresentation of core cowardice as authentic courage.

In fact, verifiable, and also unhidden, the Palestinian terrorists’ own personal fears of death are overwhelming and tangible.

In fact, these utterly primal fears are the reason they so eagerly seek a unique “death” as martyrs; that is, to best ensure that they will never “really” die. Although counter-intuitive, these Jihadists consciously choose to “kill themselves” in order *not to die*. More than anything else, perhaps, this strange decisional calculus now needs to be more fully examined and understood.

On its face, at least, the tortured terrorist logic is both twisted and paradoxical. For the expectedly enthusiastic killers, however, it all makes perfectly good sense. In the recurrent words of the PA and Hamas-appointed clergy, words heard regularly in the Jerusalem mosques:

"Palestinians must spearhead Allah's war against the Jews. The dead shall not rise until the Palestinians shall kill *all* the Jews....All agreements with Israel are provisional."

Even today, as the recent Jerusalem synagogue attack confirmed, literally thousands of Palestinians plan thoroughly to become "suicides." In this openly longed-for martyrdom, dying in the actual process of killing Jews – especially, devout and pious Jews in the synagogue – is merely a temporary discomfort, a transient inconvenience. More importantly, such "suicides" are intended to reveal, and very conspicuously, the absolute superiority of Islam over all pervasively "false belief" and "blasphemy." Reciprocally, these limited and momentary discomforts are soon expected to pass, thus rewarding the "blessed" martyrs, or "soldiers of Allah," with an incomparably heroic *freedom from death*.

What could be easier to understand? How long must it be before the world as a whole can finally acknowledge the significance of doctrinal Islamist references to the enemy as "Jews," not as "Israelis"? For them, it should finally be deciphered, the struggle between the "world of war" (*Dar al-Harb*) and the "world of Islam" (*Dar al-Islam*) has never really been about land or settlers or territories or prisoners.

Rather, it has always been about *God*.

What about pertinent Jewish thought? Significantly, this body of cumulative wisdom has never been subtle about life and death, about the "blessing" and the "curse." For Israel, always the individual Jew *writ large*, there exists a fixed, timeless, and overriding obligation to stay alive. Although this viscerally-appreciated injunction should hardly come as any sort of surprise, and may not seem to merit any claim of genuine insight, it does still stand in notably stark contrast to some principal enemy doctrines in the region.

There is more. Although widely unrecognized or disregarded, terrorist dangers from Palestinian jihadists must sometimes be assessed together with corollary and still-growing risks from a nuclearizing Iran, an enemy state that could be more or less motivated by its own Shiite-Islamic visions of "sacrifice." *Together*, perhaps even as unimagined and authentic *synergies*, the interactive effects of these two determined adversaries could portend deeply serious and potentially existential concerns for Israel.

Also, regional enemy inversions of life and death, of the "blessing" and the "curse," are rendered more worrisome by (1) the international community's persistent unwillingness to stop Iran's illegal nuclear weapons development; (2) U.S. President Barack Obama's continuing support for a "Two-State Solution;" and (3) Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's grudging but official acceptance of a Palestinian state that has been suitably

“demilitarized.”

The Palestinian side still seeks only a *One-State solution*. Nothing could be more obvious. On all of their maps, as an express sort of cartographic confirmation, Israel is drawn as an integral part of “Palestine.”

As for a demilitarized Palestine, this could never happen, in part, because any post-independence Palestinian abrogation of earlier pre-state agreements to demilitarize could be fully legal.

Moving forward, what shall Israel do to survive in this more and more confusing regional maelstrom, one now made even more chaotic by the seeming emergence of a new Cold War between Russia and the United States? If President Obama’s openly expressed wish for “a world free of nuclear weapons” were ever actually realized, the Israeli survival issue would immediately become moot. Without its nuclear arms, Israel could not endure for very long.

The presidential wish for a nuclear-weapons free world is not only unrealistic; it is also intrinsically foolish. Inevitably, Israel will insist upon retaining the indisputably critical deterrence benefits of its assorted nuclear forces. Over time, moreover, Jerusalem could find itself accepting the strategic wisdom of abandoning traditional policies of “deliberate nuclear ambiguity.” These prospective changes would likely include certain limited disclosures of the Jewish State’s *usable* and *penetration-capable* nuclear forces. Also relevant here, would be the calculable extent to which Israel might then choose to reveal selected elements of its *nuclear targeting doctrine*.

From the standpoint of ensuring successful deterrence, it could make a major difference if Israel’s nuclear forces were recognizably *counter value* (targeted on enemy cities), or *counterforce* (targeted on enemy weapons, and on related infrastructures). In turn, Israel’s strategic decisions on targeting policy could be affected, more or less, by still-ongoing regime transformations taking place across the Middle East and North Africa, especially in Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq.

All states have a fundamental (“*peremptory*,” in the preferred language of formal jurisprudence) right of self-defense. This right is made explicit in both codified and customary international law. It can be found, in part, at Article 51 of the *U.N. Charter*; also, in multiple and authoritative clarifications of *anticipatory self-defense*.

Always, Israel has a legal right to forcibly confront the mutually reinforcing harms of Iranian nuclear missile strikes, and Palestinian terror.

More generally, the failure to use force against a murderous evil imprints an indelible stain upon all that is good. This point can be discovered in the *Talmud*, which asserts, *inter alia*, that by being merciful to the cruel, one also becomes cruel to the merciful. Accordingly, such “mercy” must now be firmly rejected by both individual Jews facing Islamist terror, and by the Jewish State, facing both unconventional war and terror.

The Jewish philosopher, Martin Buber, identified the essence of every individual human life as a “meeting.” True community, said Buber, is an authentic “binding,” not merely a “bundling together.” In any true community, he continued, each must commit his whole being to “God’s dialogue with the world.” Here, as a *blessing*, each *one* must stand firm and resolute throughout the dialogue.

But how should this dialogue be sustained with those others who would absolutely refuse to “bind”? How can there ever be any viable solution to the persistently genocidal and “synergistic” enmity of both Iran and “Palestine?” After all, this core enmity is indispensable to their own very injurious meanings of *blessing* in the world.

For Iran, and also for an emergent “Palestine,” annihilated Jews, individually or collectively, are not so much a means to blessing, as a blessing in themselves. In this upside-down world, the *sacrificial killing* of Jews by war and terror is still widely-regarded to be a *religious mandate*. As a critical corollary, as we have seen, such killing can also represent a uniquely coveted path to personal immortality. For the prospective killers, therefore, bringing death to Jews may offer the altogether optimal way of warding off one’s own death.

In the best of all possible worlds, Buber’s “binding” would supplant all “bundling.” But, we don’t yet live in the best of all possible worlds, and there is absolutely nothing in the Middle East to suggest any real opportunities for meaningful neighborly improvement. It follows that Israel must continue to base its policies toward Iran and “Palestine” upon a meaningfully candid awareness of intersecting threats to Jewish life.

In all world politics, and especially in an emergent “Palestine,” there is one far greater power than armies and weapons. This greater power is *power over death*. As long as Israel’s Palestinian foes should remain convinced that slaughtering the Jews is “Allah’s will,” they will act accordingly. “Do not think that those who are killed in the way of Allah are dead,” instructs *Sura 2:154*, “for indeed they are alive, though not aware.”

Following Sigmund Freud, any continued presumption, by Israel or the United States, that Palestinian Islamists can somehow be assuaged by territorial surrenders, releasing terrorist

prisoners, or halting Jewish "settlements," would be a lethal example of "wish fulfillment." Beyond any reasonable doubt, such diplomatic "compromises" or "confidence building measures" would diminish the Jewish State, and further encourage the "soldiers of Allah."

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