

8/1/2014

Dear haverim,

I share with you two items I composed over the course of the past week. One of our members, Dr. Gary Lemack brought to my attention a shockingly antisemitic letter that was posted on the web page of one of the world's premier medical journals, *The Lancet*. In response to the ongoing situation in Israel I wrote the attached op ed piece for the *Dallas Morning News* but was just informed it would not be printed- too many other pieces "that reflect the point of view you are sharing in your op/ed." I realize both pieces are lengthy, but at your leisure I invite you to follow my thoughts on both current subjects.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Stefan J. Weinberg

Op Ed to DMN
7/30/2014

My father used to tell me about the cross that was burnt behind his house one traumatic and memorable night by the Ku Klux Klan. My mother shared many details with me regarding her nine-year flight from the Nazis- the last five years spent hiding in a small village in the Pyrenees. I wonder if I will have to relate such a personal story to my children or grandchildren one day.

My father experienced the pain of anti-Semitism in northern Michigan, where I was born and educated. My mother felt the wrath of those who hated Jews everywhere she journeyed in Europe, beginning with her birthplace of Frankfurt, Germany. My experiences pale in comparison to those of my parents but my eyes have recently seen images that signal supreme caution and challenge my faith in the future.

Israel's ongoing war with Gaza has unleashed anti-Semitic sentiments that are frightening. From Vienna, Brussels, Paris and Boston, to name a very few points of protest the anti-Semitic venom is visceral. It seems as though every community across the globe has voiced its anger toward the Jewish people.

The Israeli public has been terrorized for the past decade by rockets launched from Gaza. Suicide bombers continue to attempt to inflict harm whenever a propitious moment is sensed. The goal of Hamas remains to annihilate the citizens of the Jewish Zionist state. Captured tunnels and IDF intelligence have revealed Hamas plans to attack Israeli citizens on Rosh Hashanah with hundreds of armed terrorists rising from attack tunnels, seeking to murder and kidnap as many Israelis as possible- an Israeli 9-11.

Israel responds with force and is demonized. Israel is accused of displaying a lack of "moral equivalency" during war. I wonder, where was the cry of moral equivalency from the world when the rockets were streaking across the Israeli skies for the past decade?

The image portrayed of Israel is that of the powerful, inhuman, insensitive Goliath wreaking pain and horror on the weak, unprovoked David. I wonder what the metaphor is in Syria, where the Assad regime continues to murder tens of thousands. How many more hundreds of thousands of innocent people will be killed in north Africa? How many more hundreds of thousands of Christians, like those in Iraq will be driven from their homelands of centuries with the directive reminiscent of the Middle Ages- convert, pay a tax, leave or be killed?

What is happening? I fear a world that is losing its faith in each other. I fear a world where people are scared to speak out for what is right and true. I fear a world where we, citizens lack the courage to stand up for what we know is right and just.

In spite of overwhelming scrutiny from world media- social and professional- the Israeli government has chosen to speak with clarity. While dismissed by many as disingenuous, Israel continues to practice war and peace like no other nation in history. How many other countries are compelled to respond to aggression with military force and, subsequently establish a fully equipped hospital to treat its wounded enemy? How many times has Israel been the first country in the world to assist with humanitarian aid at the time of a crisis, regardless of race, religion or political affiliation?

I do not know of a single Jewish person who does not bear the pain of seeing another mosque, hospital, school or apartment complex in Gaza engulfed in flames. While war is never neat, and errors in assessment and judgment are always made, everyone knows why Israel has felt compelled to attack these establishments. Israel's Defense Force, although maligned by the world today has said, unequivocally to its citizens we will defend our right to exist in this world. It is that sense of moral clarity that makes me proud to be identified with the Jewish people, and especially with Israel.

We, the United States of America have always sought to speak with a similar sense of moral clarity. We have defended so many throughout history- within our borders as well as beyond- who have been disparaged. We have been the voice of the free world, ready to exercise our authority when needed.

Today, I fear for my people's security. As I witness the most recent wave of anti-Semitism overtake the world I have to wonder, will my country, the United States of America ever refuse to stand up and protect me, cowering to the voices of extremism that have infiltrated so many countries across the world?

Antisemitism will be accepted as the norm when good people fear for their own wellbeing. I hope I never see that day, especially in a community as morally strong as Dallas, Texas.

I continue to be inspired by Martin Niemoller, a Protestant minister who lived during World War II. He expressed one of the most insightful, wise and practical thoughts when he stated, "First they came for the communists, and I did not speak out- because I was not a communist; Then they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out- because I was not a socialist; Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out- because I was not a trade unionist; Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out- because I was not a Jew; Then they came for me- and there was no one left to speak out for me."

Rabbi Stefan J. Weinberg
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<http://www.thelancet.com/gaza-letter-2014>

A letter in response to the doctors and scientists who signed “an open letter for the people in Gaza in”
The Lancet,

You should be ashamed of yourselves. Using the title of doctor and scientist, you attempt to inform the world that you exercise a more sophisticated moral code than everyone else. Stating in your opening paragraph, “We are doctors and scientists...We are also informed people....we teach the ethics of our professions, together with the knowledge and practice of it...On the basis of our ethics and practice, we are denouncing what we witness in the aggression of Gaza by Israel.” Unfortunately, even though doctors and scientists have spent an inexorable amount of time pursuing their area of expertise in various schools of higher learning, regrettably those titles do not signify moral superiority. In fact, it was many of those with advanced degrees in the sciences that led the Third Reich to exercise the most heinous example of unethical practice experienced by mankind.

Reading the letter placed on the web page of *The Lancet*, one of the world’s finest medical journals demonstrates that *The Lancet* is influenced by politics, like everything else in this world. While we would like to assume that science, and especially medicine is void of bias and prejudice this terribly unfortunate letter demonstrates that even one of the world’s leading medical journals is not willing or is incapable of setting aside bigotry and prejudice when addressing a tragic situation.

To the brilliant doctors and scientists who have signed the letter in support of the people of Gaza I would like to remind you of a few important facts. In August of 2005 Israel vacated Gaza with the hope that Israel would be able to establish a peaceful coexistence with its neighbor to the west. Led by Hamas, millions of humanitarian dollars designed to build the infrastructure of a nation were redirected by the terrorist organization. Launching thousands of rockets and creating a massive underground complex designed to terrorize Israel while deepening their own pockets Hamas continues to use the people of Gaza as their pawns. Three times in nine years Israel has had to engage, militarily with Gaza for one reason- the rockets launched by Hamas continue to terrorize the Israeli population....overlooked in your letter.

To compose a three- page letter on the subject of Gaza and not include a single reference to Hamas is a travesty. A world recognized terrorist organization whose goal is the annihilation of the Jewish people Hamas has deliberately and repeatedly placed the people of Gaza in harm’s way. Not once do you refer to the fact that Hamas uses innocent people as human shields, places command posts, explosives, and weapons in the immediate vicinity of hospitals, homes, and schools. The restraint Israel continues to demonstrate is beyond commendable and should be the envy of the world- at least for those who have an enlightened appreciation for morality.

You write, “Israel’s behavior has insulted our humanity, intelligence and dignity as well as our professional ethics and efforts.” To see a letter of this ilk, on the web page of one of the world’s finest medical organizations is an insult to the medical profession’s humanity, intelligence, and dignity, and must place in question the ethics practiced by doctors and scientists.

There is really only one response to the many specious statements associated with this letter directed toward Israel and world Jewry. The world is populated by, many anti-Semites. From time to time they like to cloak themselves in anti-Zionist rhetoric. To witness the outright hate for the Jewish people across Europe is simply disgusting and an embarrassment to humanity. The 95 percent of Israeli academics who refused to consider signing such a letter represent those who are willing to stand up to a misguided world that is incapable of making just and ethical choices.

You may choose to identify any complicit group of people you wish who support the Israeli incursion into Gaza- labeling them as you wish. But, Israel, in the face of all odds continues to demonstrate a set of ethical standards that ought to make the world blush in comparison. Women, homosexuals, and Arabs in Israel are treated with a level of dignity that simply doesn't exist elsewhere in the Middle East. (Can you imagine a Jew serving in the government, let alone on the Supreme Court in Syria, Iraq, Saudia Arabia, Egypt or any other Arab nation?) The United Nations continues to single out Israel with one resolution after another condemning its actions while all other travesties across the world receive nary a whisper.

There is only one answer. We, Jews have had to learn to live with the hate known as anti-Semitism. It hurts. But, we will never give up the fight for what is right. The pursuit of a world, free of bigotry and prejudice shall always remain the dream of the Jewish people, first articulated by the greatest spokesmen the world has ever witnessed- the prophets known as Isaiah, Micah, Amos, and many others. You can continue to hide behind your credentials but I hope one day you will have the courage to see the world as it is, and understand that the struggle in the Middle East, led by Israel is a struggle of the highest caliber for what is right and ethical.

Jewish people throughout the world- sympathizers of the Zionist state- never rejoice at the loss of life. The destruction Israel has had to inflict on Gaza continues to cause tremendous consternation throughout the Jewish world. The extent to which the IDF has gone to spare innocent men, women and children is unparalleled in the history of warfare.

Israel will do what it has to do to protect its citizens. Remarkably, as the rockets have continued to fly toward Israel over the course of a decade not a word of support for Israel's citizens has been uttered from the many doctors and scientists across the world who care for the life and dignity of all people.

There is only one answer for such silence. It is called anti-semitism. It is often referred to as anti-Zionism. If only Hamas were ready to accept the reality of the Jewish state, we could then begin to address the rest of the world who cannot stomach the fact that the Jewish people might call a fraction of the land in the Middle East their own.