

FIGHTING OUR YETZER HARAS

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

However, if you do not obey the voice of God, your God, and observe all of His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, then the following curses will come upon and affect you. (Devarim 28:15)

Usually, the greatest sign that a society is coming to an end is its own corruption. It seems that, in every society, over time there is a push for more openness and greater personal freedoms, which usually results in the reduction of moral values until few exist. Then, it is just a matter of time until the people party themselves into oblivion, no matter how big and powerful they may have once been.

Perhaps one of the main reasons why societies eventually implode is because few living within them take signs of impending implosion seriously. They may acknowledge that not everything is as it should be, at which point they may argue that either things will get better, or at least not any more worse. They have always been wrong.

This is true historically without even getting into a discussion about God and Divine wrath for immoral behavior. And, indeed, one could argue that it is the way of the world in which we live, in which decay is a function of everyday life, and usually results in rot and disintegration. It is never a matter of if, this argument goes, but of when, which is usually after a lot of time. Happy is the person who lives at the beginning or the middle of the cycle, and not towards the end of it.

Hence, like in the French Revolution, during which the nobility, ate, drank, and made merry until being carted off to waiting guillotines, people feel that since society is bound to fall apart at some time, they might as well enjoy it until they can't any longer. Being only a question of when, little thought is given to avoiding the inevitable, but on how to make the best of a worsening situation.

Torah, of course, disagrees. The Torah states clearly in this week's parshah that it is not only a question of when, but also a question of if. Furthermore, the Torah also states, the when itself is only the natural result of a natural progression if and when man acts unnaturally. He can break the pattern of imploding societies if he wills it.

The trouble is that he won't, and often can't, because the most important component to creating a happy ending for society is the first thing he chucked when he started tasting the pleasure of being his own man. As it says:

When people do not accept Divine guidance, they run wild. (Mishlei 29:18)

Hence, the language of this week's parshah: If you do not obey the voice of God. Voice? What voice? The voice of God-a person has to be able to hear the voice of God if he wants to remain around forever. But, you may say in defense, there has not been any prophecy for thousands of years now, so who can hear a Divine voice today at all? Aren't we therefore off the hook?

No, said Dovid HaMelech, when he wrote these words and many others like them:

This is from God, that which is wondrous in our eyes. (Tehillim 118:23)

The Lord may work in mysterious ways, but He also communicates in ways that amaze. In fact, as Dovid HaMelech wrote, is specifically what amazes us that is supposed to talk to us, to tell us what He is thinking. When something happens that makes us stand back and say, "Well, that's something new," or, "Gee, that's unusual," then we're supposed to add the words, "I wonder what that is supposed to mean."

This is, essentially, what the parshah is telling us. It is illustrating the cause-and-effect relationship that Heaven employs as a form of communication, the same way that the body uses pain to save us from danger. For the people who do not learn Torah and use it as a map to get from Point A (where we are) to Point B (where God wants us to be) without deviation, consequence is Heaven's way of saying, "You're missing your mark."

The following recent article understands this idea:

Vigilante Law
By Cal Thomas
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SAN DIEGO -- A nation that does not see in law a right to life for its unborn children and a court that allows more than 50 million of them to be killed claiming a nonexistent "penumbra" in the Constitution is not about to acquire a moral -- much less a constitutional -- backbone when it comes to same-sex "marriage." The decision by a single, openly gay federal judge to strike down the will of 7 million Californians, tradition dating back millennia (not to mention biblical commands, which the judge decided, in his capacity as a false god, to also invalidate) is judicial vigilantism equal to Roe vs. Wade. As this case proceeds through appeals courts, to think another federal judge, one Justice Anthony Kennedy, could be the deciding vote on a divided Supreme Court, recalls the power Julius Caesar had over gladiators in the Roman Coliseum. Their fate was ultimately determined when the emperor turned his thumb up or down. At least Caesar, on occasion, was responsive to public opinion. Today, too many federal judges act more like dictators when it comes to the law. Most great powers unravel from within before

invading armies (or in America's case, terrorists) conquer them. A preacher might develop a good sermon on how nations fare when they mock God. No less a theological thinker than Abraham Lincoln concluded that our Civil War might have been God's judgment for America's toleration of slavery. If that were so, why should "the Almighty," as Lincoln frequently referred to God, stay His hand in the face of our celebration of same-sex marriage? There is more than one way to experience bankruptcy. America under the Obama administration is on the verge of economic insolvency, and now Judge Vaughn Walker has joined a conga line of similarly activist judges who are accelerating us down the path to destruction. We have been spiraling downward for some time, beginning in the '50s with the Playboy philosophy that gave men permission to avoid the bonds of marriage if they wanted to have sex. In rapid succession came the birth control pill (sex without biological consequences), "no-fault divorce" (nullifying "until death us do part"), cohabitation, easily available pornography, and a tolerance for just about anything except those who deem something intolerable. Such persons are now labeled "bigots" when once they were thought to be pillars of society. A nation that loses its moral sense is a nation without any sense at all. Muslim fanatics who wish to destroy us are correct in their diagnosis of our moral rot: loss of a fear of God, immodesty, especially among women, materialism and much more. While their solution - Sharia law - is wrong, they are not wrong about what ails us. Former Attorney General Edwin Meese tells me, "There was absolutely no knowledge, rumor or suspicion" of Vaughn Walker being a homosexual at the time of his nomination by Ronald Reagan. But if it had not been Walker, it would have been another judge, because America's problem is not entirely at the top; rather it is mostly at the bottom. What we tolerate, we get more of, and we have been tolerating a lot since the Age of Aquarius generation began the systematic destruction of what past generations believed they had sacrificed, fought and died to protect. None of this should surprise anyone who takes the time to read and understand what happens to people and nations that disregard God.

It is amazing how many people do not believe in any of this. And, if you had taken a poll in Rome just before it had collapsed and asked people the same questions, their answers would have been the same as well. They believed in god, lots of them, but the kind you can buy off with sacrifices or bribes, or by naming a bathhouse after them.

The Western world's motto ought to be: Politically correct, spiritually bereft, the perfect combination for national suicide. For example, the new Muslim center they are going to build right in the face of the place that 3,000 people died when Arab terrorists crashed into the Twin Towers, something that President Obama and Mayor Bloomberg can't have happen fast enough.

To show how different Americans are from Islamic Fundamentalists, of which there are many, and whom it is usually too difficult to recognize until too late, some top American leaders are prepared to embrace stupidity and reject conventional wisdom, just to make their point. George Washington did it, gushed Michael Bloomberg, when he supported the building of a synagogue in his time.

Give me a break. The Jewish people were not comprised of fundamentalists and they certainly had never even attempted any terrorists acts against the American people. On the contrary, they had fought alongside Washington and his troops for American liberty, proving themselves to be loyal allies. Indeed, their attitude towards their American hosts was one of respect, not of disrespect, and they harbored no national desire to convert the American people to Judaism. Not a single Jew at that time posed a national threat.

Over here in Israel, we know better, though we are stuck in the same problem. Do you know why Arab terrorists have been so successful in such a small country with such high security? Not because of Arab ingenuity, because they have little. How much genius does it take to strap an explosive belt around your waste and blow it up while walking by a crowded restaurant in downtown Jerusalem?

None.

The answer is, the non-terrorist Arabs, because, as long as a single Arab is able to walk the streets of Israel like a normal citizen and go about his business like a Jewish Israeli, then the bad guys have cover. And, not only do they know this, they exploit it tremendously, with great success, as they already have, and most certainly will, in America and other Western countries, and there is nothing that real moderates can do to stop them.

Nor will they try to, because when it comes to Islamic Fundamentalists, you are either for them, or against, and being against them carries with it severe retribution. Furthermore, short of a major war against Islam, there is no way to stop them from what they admittedly plan to do, and what they have mostly succeeded at doing in Europe already.

And, do not consider it a small thing that the President's name happens to be Islamic by design. Who knows? Perhaps in the future after America becomes a Muslim country, President Obama will be considered the first Muslim President of the new United States of Arabia. A chilling thought.

As it ought to be, because it represents a warning to all Westerners, including those of us living here in the Middle-East. It is an amazing thing, and it should be wondrous in our eyes, making it a direct message from God. There may be billions of Muslims the world over, of which millions are probably ready to die to bring Islam to the rest of the world, but they are a single message from Heaven: We are off the mark.

Fighting against the threat does not mean going to military war, except as last resort. It means going to war against ourselves, against our own yetzer haras. It means stopping to mock God, and getting with His program, while we still can. If we choose to ignore the message and continue to throw caution to the wind, then we too will go the route of the other nations before the great ones of today.

Judging by the looks of it, that is the way history will go once again, barring some major event to turn things around.

Text

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Rabbi Winston has authored many books on Jewish philosophy (Hashkofa). If you enjoy Rabbi Winston's Perceptions on the Parsha, you may enjoy his books. Visit Rabbi Winston's [online book store](#) for more details! www.thirtysix.org