

*Dove hayyiti vgam zaqanti vlo raiti aich lhamshikh lihyot dove.*

I was a dove and not a hawk. I cannot hold either position these days because they simply don't apply to the current situation. I find myself looking at the intransigence of Hizbollah and the Islamists who seem to be in charge of what people call the "Arab street." For all my inner struggles to seek to find a possibility of dialogue with them, a way to have the conversation in the presence of the living God; I can find none. At this point, it seems that the reasons that are being given as cover for their attack on Israel are not the real ones. Behind Hizbollah, there are not only Syria and Iran, but also the perception that the United States is currently very weakened and stretched beyond any capability to interfere because of Iraq and Afghanistan. The financial condition of the overwhelming national debt, of which foreign powers like China and the Saudis hold the promissory notes, makes it clear that Israel cannot count on the military support of the United States. Other European, Western nations are afraid of their own Islamic populations. Russia, under Putin, while draconian against the Chechnyans, is sitting on the fence. All of this makes for tremendous vulnerability for Israel.

When I look around at the political situation at this time---America is no longer in the absolute superpower condition that arrogated itself at the time of the collapse of the Soviet regime. China is growing and raising its head, and in the midst of all this, America is stretched to the limit. The enemies of the United States are very much aware of how stretched the resources are at this moment for the United States. For Hizbollah, to attack now is as much a stroke of vicious genius as it was the evil genius of bin Laden to hit the World Trade Center Towers. It caused a domino effect that spread all over and plunged the world of before 9/11 into chaos.

The images shown on television and on the Web set-up what amounts to a reversal of the David and Goliath situation. Israel, with her Air Force and technical resources is depicted as the Goliath, while the images showing our enemies depict them as David. But, look at the resources Hizbollah has received from the Syrians and from the Iranians. They were not simple sling shots. So I ask myself; what should Israel do under these attacks from an entity that is not a clearly defined nation that could be called to task before any world forum?

Behind this are arrayed nations just waiting to find a way in which they could also step in and attack us as well.

The rhetoric of the public discourse has it that there were a number of Israelis who "died" in the attacks, whereas the Lebanese were "killed." Note the difference in the verbs.

Still, I grieve for the victims on both sides and for their surviving families.

From a contemplative point of view, I can see each religion both from within and from without. I see each tradition and lineage as it has developed through history. All fundamentalisms tend to be a-historical. The messages heard from Moslem pulpits pour out a stream of vituperative harangue which comes from an uncritical and heavily biased point of view.

In their sermons they take from statements of the Hebrew prophets, chastising our people in order to bring them to *t'shuvah*, and twist these quotes to characterize contemporary Judaism as "a religion of apes," and Christianity as "a religion of pigs." (But, who aped whom?)

Anyone who has a notion of history and culture can recognize in the content of the *Koran* a lot of popular material that was around the days of the Messenger, peace be upon him. Some of it had been from the Jewish culture commonly shared in that area. It was at that moment, a snapshot of a specific revelation for the inhabitants Arabian Peninsula that was coming down, handed to them by the God Who still goes around from nation to nation, from group to group, asking them if they will accept the sacred teaching that God is constantly revealing.

In later generations, they needed to make peace between the Aristotelian cosmology and the *Koran*, just as we did in the days of Maimonides. They allowed for a continuing reinterpretation of the revelation in terms

of what they experienced in their present. Later on, fundamentalist, fearing that reinterpretation would soften the harsh literal message, forbade the process of *Ijtihad* – reinterpretation, in this way, stunting the high mentality, philosophy and morality of Islam's golden age. Because of the *Fatwa* against *Ijtihad*, they would not be able to take Islam into the next paradigm. This arrest of the process of reinterpretation was further exacerbated by the Wahabis who currently control this fundamentalist tide and the opinions of many of the faithful.

Where is the moral outrage that I would expect from a religious leadership? one that in theory accepts both Sunnis and Shi'ites as pilgrims entitled to make the Hajj to Mecca, people who cannot be accused of being infidels? And yet, the religious leadership stands by without protest amidst vicious carnage. Not a single voice proclaiming the message of *Allah*, the Compassionate, the Merciful is heard curbing the violence in Darfur. There is no Islamic moral voice that speaks out to those who bombed the trains in Bombay where workers (many Moslems among them) were on their way to come home after a days work to their simple meals, to be with their families. It has become clear that what we consider at this point to be “civilized and responsible interaction,” cannot be expected from people whose moral plane is on much lower levels on the Kohlberg scale than ours. Moslems often quote as their own in their apologetics the co-opted rabbinic statement that says, “one who kills one person is as if one killed an entire world,” so where is the cry of outrage?

Again, I ask myself, what should Israel do to respond to those provocations in circumstances where there is not a clearly defined enemy nation, and yet, behind Hizbollah are arrayed nations just waiting to find a way in which they could also step in for the kill?

How can I blame our people, who have for such a long time been living under stress and unremitting trauma, for regressing to a level of using force to match that used against them?

I, for many years have been very much a lover of Sufism, and through Sufism, of an Islam that has higher levels of understanding, that is involved in an interpretation that looks at the text of the *Koran* not from the outside, the *Zahir*, but from the inside, the *Batin*. Sufis recognize the way in which the teachings are meant to transform people from being governed by the *Nafs*, the animalistic nature, to the governance of the *Ruhh*, the sacred soul-spirit. But, what can one do in an environment where anyone who publicly dares to suggest such an interior approach is considered a heretic, whose life is in danger of a *Fatwa* marking them for death?

If it would make any sense for me to travel to Iran and to speak with the Ayatollah Khomeini, the *Posseq* behind Iran's president in order to urge him to be the voice of compassion and peace---I would do so. Alas! according to some of the shariatic rules, he would be prevented from responding to my *Salaam Alaikum* with an hand shake and *Aalaikum As-salaam*.

My heart and my aspirations, my thought and my rhetoric, is with the Doves and not the Hawks. But having family members living in Tzefat, I feel more like a lioness that is poised to defend her cubs.

I do not know what more I can say except that I know that some of you want me to make some kind of a statement. The only statement I can make is as we are now in the beginning of the “three weeks”; it's always been a difficult time on the Jewish calendar. I pray that we may make it past the Ninth of Av without a still more major flare-up of war and destruction.

So what are we to do? I've asked myself--- and those of you who are good at the martial arts, what kind of political Aikido could we at this point engage in that would minimize the bloodshed while using the karmic energies of this moment in the service of peace?

I don't understand it and I don't see it. *Hashem Yerahem! Osseh Shalom bimromav* – that is much easier than *Hu ya'asseh Shalom Aleinu v'al kol Yisrael vYishmael* that seems so much harder. May we come to *T"U B'av* and find peace.