

The Worship of Violence
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The President of Israel, Shimon Peres has said that no nation would stand by while its citizens are subject to rocket attack. Certainly so. One of the primary responsibilities of government is to protect its citizens. The question here is whether force is effective against Hamas in Gaza. I fear that the answer is no.

I believe that we are witnessing, once again, the idolatrous worship of violence. The faulty thinking goes like this: the situation is intolerable, we cannot figure out any other way to resolve the problem, therefore we must turn to the one approach that can work—violence. We saw this kind of thinking in the Bush Administration run up to the Iraqi invasion. I call this idolatrous worship because akin to bowing to an idol, we bow to violence. We assume that violence has power and efficacy, when it does not. The Israeli occupation of Gaza in 2005 did not stop the rockets. What leads us to believe that the current invasion will lead to a different result? Faulty thinking. False attribution of power and efficacy. Idolatry.

A second incidence of faulty thinking is evident in the Gaza invasion, the assertion that talking with Hamas gives terrorists legitimacy. This canard seems to gain authority because it is repeated so often, in particular by our current President. In fact, Hamas has gained legitimacy by: 1) Attempting to meet the real social and economic needs of the people of Gaza; 2) The religious radicalization of the Palestinian people as a result, in some part, of the oppression at the hands of the Israeli authorities.

I do not have an answer to the problem. But I do not think that lack of an evident alternative should silence us from speaking out and condemning senseless and horrific violence.

I do think that talking with Hamas is better than fighting, because fewer people will die, on both sides. I also think that the Gaza rockets will stop when Israel and the world community offers the Palestinian people a real alternative, a true path toward political sovereignty and economic stability. A comprehensive peace plan and an economic development plan needs to be put on the table. I am not implying that Hamas and the Palestinians do not bear their own significant responsibility for the current situation. Certainly they do. But I do believe that only in the context of a true peace and economic development effort will the rockets stop.