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"A MORAL EQUIVALENT FOR VIOLENCE", or  
"HOW TO TAME THE AGGRESSIVE SPIRIT IN  
AMERICA"

A High Holiday Sermon  
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AN INFORMED PERSON HAS TO BE PUZZLED AND SHOCKED BY WHAT HE HAS EXPERIENCED, IF ONLY BY WAY OF T.V. AND NEWSPAPER, IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS. THIS PAST YEAR WE WEPT WHEN WE HEARD THAT THE MOST ARTICULATE SPOKESMAN FOR THE NEGRO CAUSE, MARTIN LUTHER KING WAS MURDERED. WE HAD HARDLY RECOVERED FROM THAT WHEN WE WERE GIVEN THE NEWS THAT THE LIFE OF ROBERT KENNEDY HAD BEEN TAKEN. RESEARCHERS THEN INFORMED US THAT A TOTAL OF 20,5000 AMERICANS HAD BEEN KILLED BY GUNSHOT IN THE PREVIOUS YEAR, THAT 750,000 HAD BEEN SIMILARLY KILLED SINCE THE TURN OF THE CENTURY. IF WE READ FURTHER, WE FIND THAT 100,000 PEOPLE WERE WOUNDED BY GUNFIRE IN AMERICA LAST YEAR ALONE. SOME OF YOU MAY KNOW THAT THIS VERY WINDOW BEHIND ME HAS SEVEN HOLES, MADE ONLY LAST WEEK BY SOMEONE ANXIOUS TO GIVE THE RABBI A MESSAGE. HE GOT THE MESSAGE, BUT HE DIDN'T NEED THOSE SHOTS SO CLOSE TO HOME TO GET THE MESSAGE. THE MESSAGE IS THAT WE LIVE IN A NATION WHERE PEOPLE NOT ONLY HAVE GREAT AGGRESSION, BUT AS IN NO OTHER COUNTRY, THEY HAVE ACCESS TO THE WEAPONS WHERE THEY CAN DO GREAT HARM IN UNLEASHING THAT AGGRESSION.

THERE ARE SOME WHO SAY THAT AMERICANS ARE MUCH MORE FILLED WITH HATE AND THE DISPOSITION TO EXPRESS THAT HATRED VIOLENTLY THAN THE PEOPLE OF OTHER NATIONS. IN BRITIAN, FOR EXAMPLE, NOT EVEN THE POLICE CARRY GUNS, AND ONLY THIRTY PEOPLE WERE KILLED THERE LAST YEAR. THE PSYCHOLOGISTS TELL US THAT ALL HUMAN BEINGS HAVE AGGRESSIVE INSTINCTS, BUT THE ANTHROPOLIGISTS ASSURE US THAT IN SOME SOCIETIES AND CULTURES, AGGRESSION IS STIMULATED, WHILE IN OTHER CULTURES, THE NATURAL HUMAN AGGRESSIVE INSTINCT IS SOMEHOW SUBLIMATED AND CONTROLLED.

THROUGHOUT HUMAN HISTORY, THERE HAVE BEEN THREE BASIC WAYS OF REACTING TO AGGRESSION. WE MIGHT CLASSIFY THEM UNDER THESE THREE HEADINGS: 1) COUNTER-AGGRESSION-THAT IS, RETURNING FORCE FOR FORCE AND ANGER FOR ANGER; 2) ESCAPE OR DENIAL-THAT IS, WITHDRAWING FROM THE FIELD AND YIELDING TO THE AGGRESSOR; AND 3) THE POSITIVE INVERSION OF AGGRESSION-THAT IS, TRYING TO USE MAN'S AGGRESSIVE INSTINCTS TO ACCOMPLISH CONSTRUCTIVE PURPOSES.

1. COUNTER-AGGRESSION MEANS OPEN WAR. A GOOD EXAMPLE OF THIS BETWEEN NATIONS IS THE U. S. RESPONSE TO AGGRESSION IN VIET NAM. OUR GOVERNMENT SAID, "ALL RIGHT. YOU WANT TO FIGHT. YOU WANT TO VIOLATE THE CODE OF RELATIONS BETWEEN PEOPLES. THEN, WE ACCEPT YOUR TERMS. WE WILL ANSWER DEATH WITH GREATER DEATH". SOMETIMES, COUNTER AGGRESSION IS UNAVOIDABLE AS WHEN A PARENT HAS TO WHIP A CHILD THAT REPEATEDLY VIOLATES THE RULES BY BEATING UP ON HIS YOUNGER BROTHERS AND SISTERS, OR AS WHEN A POLICEMAN DEFENDS A FAMILY AGAINST A BURGLAR. SOMETIMES, THIS PROCEDURE WORKS OUT POSITIVELY, BUT, GENERALLY SPEAKING, A NATION WHICH IS CONQUERED BY SUPERIOR FORCE ONLY NOURISHES THE GREATER HATRED AND DREAMS OF THE DAY WHEN IT CAN DO THE SAME TO ITS CONQUEROR, AS WITNESS THE ARAB NATIONS TODAY AND GERMANY, AFTER WORLD WAR ONE. THE CHILD THAT IS WHIPPED THINKS TERRIBLE THOUGHTS ABOUT HIS PARENTS, THEN, FEELS GUILTY ABOUT THE THOUGHTS, AND MAY ULTIMATELY HIT BROTHER OR SISTER EVEN HARDER, BECAUSE AFTER ALL, HE CAN'T HIT MOMMY OR DADDY, WHOM HE WOULD REALLY LIKE TO HIT, SO HE TAKES OUT HIS FEELINGS ON THE SCAPEGOAT. THE WHOLE HORRIBLE SAGA OF ANTI-SEMITISM IS BASICALLY THE STORY OF AGGRESSION FALLING UPON THE DEFENSELESS PART OF SOCIETY.

EVEN THE RECORDS KEPT ON CRIMINALS TEND TO SHOW THAT COUNTER-AGGRESSION AGAINST THE CRIMINAL BY MEANS OF IMPRISONMENT HAS LITTLE EFFECT ON CHANGING THE LIFE OF THE CRIMINAL, UNLESS IT IS TO MAKE HIM MORE DETERMINED TO GET BACK AT THE ESTABLISHMENT WHICH CAUSED HIM TO LANGUISH IN PRISON. CRIMINOLOGISTS TODAY ARE TALKING ABOUT TREATING CRIMINALS IN A MORE POSITIVE MANNER, JUST AS PSYCHOLOGISTS TALK ABOUT SUPPORTING A CHILD AFFIRMATIVELY RATHER THAN PUNISHING HIM, AND SPECIALISTS IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS ASSURE US THAT, IN THE LONG RUN, WARS SOLVE LITTLE OR NOTHING. THIS IS NOT TO SUGGEST THAT THOSE WHO ARE HURTING OTHERS SHOULD BE PERMITTED TO DO SO; CERTAINLY, THEY MUST BE CONTROLLED, BUT WHAT WE DO WITH THEM BEYOND RESTRAINING THEM, AND HOW WE HOPE TO RE-TRAIN AND EDUCATE THEM IS THE VAST, OPEN QUESTION IN THESE TREMULOUS TIMES.

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II. A SECOND WAY OF REACTING TO AGGRESSION IS TO TAKE THE PATH OF ESCAPE OR DENIAL. ABOUT TWO THOUSAND YEARS AGO, THE TINY STATE OF JUDEA WAS TREATED SO POORLY BY THE CONQUERING ROMANS THAT A SMALL NUMBER OF JEWS RETREATED TO THE DESERT AND FORMED THERE A UTOPIAN SOCIETY TO

PREPARE FOR THE COMING END OF THE WORLD. THIS GROUP, KNOWN AS THE ESSENES, INCLUDED NO WOMEN, FOR THEY WERE NOT INTERESTED IN THE PRESERVATION OF SOCIETY, AND THEY WERE ANXIOUS TO LEAD THE LIFE OF COMPLETE BODILY PURITY. THEY HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH EITHER ROMAN OR JEWISH SOCIETY, SINCE THEY CONSIDERED ALL HUMAN GOVERNMENT CORRUPT. THEY BATHED RITUALLY THROUGHOUT THE DAY AND MAINTAINED EXTREME STANDARDS OF CLEANLINESS. THEY SOUGHT TO AVOID ROMAN CRUELTY BY RUNNING AWAY AND SURRENDERING THE HOPE OF REFORMING HUMAN SOCIETY. THE ESSENES, IN DOING SO, VIOLATED EVERY SIGNIFICANT PRINCIPAL IN JUDAISM, AND, FOR THIS REASON, THEY ARE HARDLY MENTIONED IN TRADITIONAL JEWISH SOURCES.

WE HAVE OUR MODERN ESSENES, HOWEVER, WHO SEEK ESCAPE FROM THE VIOLENCE OF MODERN SOCIETY BY WITHDRAWING FROM IT. AREN'T WE DESCRIBING THE HIPPIES, THE FLOWER CHILDREN, WHO INSIST THAT ALL THAT IS REAL IS LOVE? AREN'T WE ALSO SPEAKING, AT LEAST IN PART, ABOUT THOSE REBELS IN THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY WHO WILL HAVE NO TRUCK WITH IT BECAUSE IT CONTAINS SOME DIRTY POLITICIANS. ALL OF THOSE WHO HOLD THEMSELVES ABOVE THE FRAY AND WHO ARE UNWILLING TO GET THEIR HANDS DIRTY IN THE EVERY DAY MESS WHICH, UNFORTUNATELY, IS PART OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS, ARE, IT SEEMS, TO ME, ESCAPISTS. THEY DENY REALITY, AND ARE UNABLE TO COME TO GRIPS WITH IT.

SOME RELIGIONS ARE BASED ENTIRELY ON THE DOCTRINE OF ESCAPE. BUDDHISM, AS IT IS PRACTICED TODAY, IS BASICALLY AN ATTEMPT TO DENY MEN'S INSTINCTUAL NATURE. IT TEACHES THAT THE WAY FOR MAN TO CONTROL HIS BODY INSTINCTS IS FOR HIM TO BECOME ALL SPIRIT, WHILE DENYING TO HIS BODY MOST OF ITS MATERIALISTIC AND ANIMALISTIC NEEDS. IS IT ANY WONDER, THEN, THAT SO MANY OF THE UNHAPPY YOUNGSTERS OF OUR GENERATION ARE TURNING TO VARIETIES OF BUDDHISM? IN BUDDHISM, AS IN LSD, AND MARIJUANA, THEY FIND THEIR NEW REALITY, WHICH IS NOT OF THIS WORLD.

IN THE INTEREST OF HONESTY, WE ALL HAVE TO ADMIT THAT WE, TOO, SEEK ESCAPE FROM THE VIOLENCE OF OUR DAY IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER. YOU KNOW WHAT I HAVE DISCOVERED ABOUT MYSELF LATELY? I DON'T LISTEN TO THE NEWS ABOUT VIET NAM ANYMORE. I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ABOUT HOW MANY BOYS WERE KILLED, EITHER ON OUR SIDE OR ON THEIRS. I CAN'T BEAR IT ANY LONGER, SO I FIND MYSELF PRETENDING THAT THERE ISN'T ANY VIET NAM WAR, AND I AM CERTAINLY NOT DOING ANYTHING ABOUT STOPPING IT. DO YOU FIND THAT YOU ARE DOING THIS KIND OF THING ALSO? DENIAL IS A FEATURE OF THE BEHAVIOR OF EACH OF US, BUT WE WILL HAVE TO CONFESS TO EACH OTHER THAT WE CAN'T SOLVE ANY PROBLEMS THIS WAY.

ANOTHER WAY IN WHICH WE SEEK TO ESCAPE FROM THE BATTLE OF LIFE IS TO SAY TO OURSELVES, "WELL, WE CAN'T FIGHT CITY HALL". THIS IS ANOTHER WAY OF SAYING, "YOU CAN'T CHANGE ANYTHING. THINGS WILL ALWAYS BE THE SAME. THERE WILL ALWAYS BE MISERY AND VIOLENCE". IT IS TRUE THAT HUMAN BEINGS HAVE THE TENDENCY TO ATTACK ONE ANOTHER AND TO EXPLOIT ONE ANOTHER, BUT IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT IF WE DON'T TRY TO RESTRAIN THOSE WHO USE FORCE DESTRUCTIVELY, THINGS WILL NOT STAY THE SAME. THEY WILL GET INCREASINGLY WORSE.

III. A THIRD WAY OF REACTING TO AGGRESSION OR VIOLENCE IS THE MORE CONSTRUCTIVE WAY. OUR RELIGIOUS TRADITION TEACHES THAT PEOPLE DO AGGRESSIVE THINGS BECAUSE THEY ARE BASICALLY UNHAPPY AND IN NEED OF HELP. YOU REMEMBER THE STORY OF THE HASIDIC RABBI WHO WAS WALKING IN THE FOREST, WHEN HE STUMBLED UPON THE HEART OF ALL EVIL. HE THOUGHT TO HIMSELF, IF I KILL THE HEART OF ALL EVIL, EVIL WILL VANISH FROM THE WORLD. WHEREUPON HE SET UPON STRANGLING IT, BUT EVEN AS HE DID SO, HE HEARD A CRY EMANATING FROM IT, LIKE THE CRY OF ONE WHO SUFFERS. RELEASING THE HEART AND RETURNING TO HIS STUDY, THE RABBI SAID, "NOW I UNDERSTAND THAT PEOPLE DO EVIL BECAUSE OF THEIR SUFFERING, AND TO ELIMINATE EVIL, WE HAVE TO ELIMINATE HUMAN SUFFERING".

THIS IS ONE APPROACH THAT OUR FATHERS SUGGESTED FOR THE HANDLING OF MAN'S AGGRESSIVE SPIRIT. STILL ANOTHER STORY IN THE TALMUD SHOWS US THE PROFOUND INSIGHT THAT OUR TEACHERS HAD INTO THE NATURE OF MAN. ON A CERTAIN DAY IN A EUROPEAN VILLAGE, THE VILLAGERS CAPTURED THE YEZER HA-RAH, THE EVIL INCLINATION, AND IMPRISONED IT IN A CAGE. AT FIRST, THE VILLAGERS REJOICED IN THE THOUGHT THAT THEY HAD ENDED EVIL FOREVER, BUT THEN, THEY HAD SECOND THOUGHTS; FOR ON THAT DAY, NO CHILDREN WERE BORN, SAYS THE TALMUD; THE CHICKENS DID NOT LAY THEIR EGGS, AND THE BOYS STOPPED DATING THE GIRLS. THEREUPON, THE VILLAGERS RELEASED THE YEZER HA-RAH, THE EVIL INCLINATION, UNDERSTANDING THAT ITS ACTIVITY WAS ESSENTIAL TO MUCH THAT WAS CREATIVE AND GOOD IN LIFE.

THE PROBLEM WITH HUMAN BEINGS, WE KNOW TODAY FROM NEWLY ACQUIRED PSYCHOLOGICAL INSIGHTS, IS NOT THAT WE HAVE AGGRESSIVE INSTINCTS, BUT THAT WE DON'T KNOW HOW TO CHANNEL THEM CONSTRUCTIVELY. WE MUST FACE UP TO THE FACT THAT WE HAVE NOT DEVELOPED WITHIN OUR SOCIETY THE KIND OF INCENTIVES THAT WILL KEEP AMERICANS FROM ABUSING THEIR GOD-GIVEN POWERS.

IN THIS REGARD, WE COULD LEARN SOMETHING FROM THE INDIANS OF SANTA

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MARTA IN COLUMBIA. I AM TOLD THAT THESE INDIANS NEVER CARRY ANY WEAPONS. WHEN THERE IS A GRIEVANCE BETWEEN TWO OF THE INDIANS, THEY AGREE TO MEET AT A SITE OF A HUGE ROCK. EACH COMES TO THE BATTLE ARENA ARMED WITH A BIG STICK. WHEN THE FIGHT COMMENCES EACH INDIAN BEGINS TO HIT THE ROCK WITH HIS STICK AS HARD AS HE CAN. ALL THE WHILE HE SCREAMS OUT LOUD A TORRENT OF INSULTING WORDS DIRECTED AGAINST HIS ENEMY. THE ONE WHO HITS THE ROCK HARDEST, THE ONE WHO BREAKS HIS STICK FIRST, WINS. THEN, THE TWO ENEMIES EMBRACE ON THE SPOT AND RETURN HOME TO SHARE A DRINK TOGETHER.

WE CAN AGREE THAT THIS IS PRIMITIVE BEHAVIOR - OR IS IT? ISN'T IT LESS SAVAGE THAN RESOLVING A QUARREL BY SHOOTING, WHICH IS APPARENTLY THE AMERICAN CUSTOM? THE COLUMBIAN INDIANS HAVE PRESERVED THEIR CUSTOM BY INSTRUCTION OF THE ELDERS DOWN THROUGH THE CENTURIES. WE AMERICANS HAVE PRESERVED OUR CUSTOM OF THE GUN DUEL FROM THE TIME OF THE DAYS OF THE WILD WEST. OUR INSTRUCTION COMES NOT FROM OUR ELDERS SO MUCH AS FROM MOVIES AND T.V., WHICH ARE THE HIGH MARK OF OUR ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY.

THERE ARE THINGS WE CAN DO WITH THE HUMAN AGGRESSIVE SPIRIT, HOWEVER, OTHER THAN HAVE PEOPLE HITTING ON A ROCK. THE PRINCIPLE OF THE HITTING OF THE ROCK IS TO GIVE PEOPLE A CHANCE TO RELEASE THEIR FEELINGS WITHOUT <sup>really</sup> HURTING ANYONE. IN MODERN SOCIETY SOME OF US HIT A LITTLE BALL WITH A STICK OR WE KICK A PIGSKIN. WE MIGHT HUMOROUSLY SAY THAT A PSYCHIATRIST IS A SUBSTITUTE FOR THE ROCK. HE NOT ONLY RECEIVES OUR AGGRESSION WILLINGLY, HE ALSO HELPS GUIDE OUR AGGRESSION INTO CONSTRUCTIVE CHANNELS. THE REASON MANKIND HAS FOR SO LONG PERMITTED WAR TO EXIST IS THAT WAR GIVES HIM A CHANCE TO RELEASE HIS AGGRESSIVE FEELINGS, SEEMINGLY, FOR THE NOBLEST OF CAUSES. WHAT WE NEED, THEN, IS A SUBSTITUTE FOR WAR, WHAT WILLIAM JAMES HAS CALLED A "MORAL EQUIVALENT FOR WAR". WE NEED TO UNITE THE PEOPLE OF OUR NATION, AND ULTIMATELY OF THE WORLD, IN A GRAND BATTLE. NOT A FIGHT IN WHICH PEOPLE WILL BE KILLED, BUT A FIGHT IN WHICH POVERTY WILL BE KILLED. WE NEED TO SET UP A BATTLE IN WHICH RACIAL PREJUDICE WILL BE KILLED. WE NEED TO CONSCRIPT OUR YOUNG PEOPLE IN AN ARMY DEDICATED TO ELIMINATE SOME OF THE GREAT INEQUITIES WITHIN OUR COUNTRY AND IN THE UNDERPRIVILEGED NATIONS. I AM SPEAKING OF AN INTERNAL PEACE CORPS AND A STRENGTHENED INTERNATIONAL PEACE CORPS WITH THE ELEMENT OF CONSCRIPTION AND DISCIPLINE. I AM SPEAKING OF BANDS BLARING AND BONDS BEING SOLD TO UNDERWRITE THE EFFORT AND UNIFORMS AND MEDALS AND PROPAGANDA TO BUILD UP THE ENEMY. I AM SPEAKING OF YOUNG PEOPLE LIVING IN SIMPLE BARRACKS IN THE AREAS WHERE MISSISSIPPI NEGROES ARE STARVING AND YOUNG PEOPLE WORKING UNDER SERGEANTS AND LIEUTENANTS

TO IMPROVE CONDITIONS THERE. I AM SPEAKING OF PEACE ARMY DIVISIONS INVADING HARLEM WITH RAT POISON, HAMMERS, AND PAINT BRUSHES, TO STAY THERE UNTIL VICTORY IS SUBSTANTIALLY WON. I THINK THAT THIS KIND OF APPROACH, FILLED WITH IDEALISM, YET GIVING OUR YOUNG PEOPLE THE CHANCE TO FLING THEMSELVES AGAINST THE ENEMY, WILL RELEASE THEIR FEELINGS OF ANGER AGAINST THE STATUS QUO. THEY CAN TAKE OUT THEIR VENGEANCE AGAINST FATHER FOR LEAVING THEM SUCH A MESSED UP WORLD, BY DESTROYING THE MESS, AND THE NET RESULTS WILL BE FOR THEIR OWN BENEFIT AND OURS.

PLEASE DO NOT REGARD THIS AS A WILD PLAN, FOR AT LEAST ONE OF THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES WHO ORIGINALLY WROTE THE PEACE CORP BILL HAS ALREADY SPOKEN OF A BROADER PEACE CORP. AND IF YOU VISITED ISREAL YOU WOULD SEE THAT THE PLAN IS ALREADY IN OPERATION. THERE IS ALMOST NO JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IN ISRAEL; NO SHOOTING UP OF ISRAELIS BY ISRAELIS. THESE FACTS WERE TRUE EVEN BEFORE THE RECENT ARAB WAR, FOR THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL HAVE ALREADY THE MORAL EQUIVALENT OF WAR. THEY HAVE TO RELEASE THEIR AGGRESSIVE INSTINCTS AGAINST A SOIL THAT IS BARREN AND REFUSES TO YIELD ITS FRUIT. THEY HAVE TO FIGHT THE MOUNTAINS WHICH REFUSE TO CARRY WATER TO THEIR TOP UNLESS THEY ARE ATTACKED WITH PIPE LINES AND PUMPING STATIONS. MOREOVER, THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF ISRAEL ARE NOT LEFT OUT OF THE COUNTRY'S STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL. THEY ARE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE STRUGGLE, EVERY PAIR OF HANDS IS NEEDED AND USED.....NEEDED AND USED. THIS IS THE SECRET, DEAR FRIENDS, FOR ALL OF US, FOR OUR YOUNG AND FOR THE OLD. WE WILL STOP KILLING EACH OTHER OFF, AND WE WILL STOP TAKING OUT OUR FRUSTRATIONS ON EACH OTHER WHEN WE MAKE COMMON CAUSE AGAINST A LEGITIMATE ENEMY. LET US PUT THE YESER HA-RAH TO WORK PRODUCTIVELY, AND LET US GATHER THE HEART OF EVIL TO OUR BREAST THAT IT MIGHT LEARN HOW TO LAUGH AND NOT CRY.