

“On Evil and Beyond Gaza.” Response to President Biden’s Speech in Israel. Emanuel Pastreich

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President Biden rushed to Israel to give his blessings, and the blessings of the United States, and of anyone else so foolish to join the parade, to whatever Israel and the United States may do after the more than ambiguous attacks of Hamas.

President Biden declared, unambiguously stated, that Hamas had “unleashed pure unadulterated evil on the world.” He was repeating a script that someone on his staff had handed him, and he did so without any feelings or insights, just playing the role assigned to him by the rich and powerful as a pathetically broken man in a hopelessly broken system.

One must ask whether President Biden would know what evil is if it was wrapped around his neck, if it was hugging him like a brother, or if it looked him in the eyes from the other side of the mirror.

The cynicism with which Biden’s handlers throw around that word “evil” should not blind us to the blight wrought by something horrible that we see all around us; whether it is mothers caring for their sons gone blind from vaccines in Atlanta, or fathers carrying their crumpled daughter’s bodies wrapped in cardboard in Gaza.

President Biden’s speech was a fraud, but “evil” is no fraud.

Although my focus must fall, perforce, on policy, and I should leave debates on evil to learned professors of philosophy or men and women of the faith, nevertheless I feel compelled to speak out today about evil because our failure to understand the nature of evil will be our undoing. If we fail to grasp evil in its true nature, we may well roll blindly into a world war over the next month that will leave hundreds of millions dead. There is not much time and there is no time for self-deception, for self-indulgence.



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Evil is real and it is not limited to the teachings of religious scriptures.

Evil is rarely an ugly monster that terrifies children with sharp claws and jagged fangs like Godzilla tearing through Tokyo.

No, evil is often seductive, attractive, and even enticing, leading us to accept it as a friend, an ally, because it flatters us and makes us feel more important than others, because it whispers in our ears that it is okay to do terrible things as long as no one else knows what we have done.

Evil is invisible; it morphs into one form, and then into another, taking on the attributes that we most desire and then vanishing suddenly, mysteriously, leaving us wondering why we have so much blood on our hands.

Although Hollywood movies suggest that evil is perpetrated by some brilliant genius behind the curtains, more often than not the origins of evil are banal and ordinary, something mentioned in passing at a backyard barbeque. Original acts of evil do not draw attention to themselves at all and therefore are easily passed over without comment.

That is the threat of a banal and undetectable evil that Hannah Arendt described thus:

“Evil is never ‘radical;’ it is only extreme. It possesses neither depth nor any demonic dimension. It can overgrow and lay waste the whole world precisely because it spreads like a fungus on the surface. Evil defies thought because when thought tries to go to the roots of evil, it is frustrated, finding nothing there. That is the ‘banality’ of evil.”

I am struggling to uncover the nature of evil because it threatens us Americans from within.

I am forced to recognize that I do not have to go to Gaza to find evil. No, I do not even need to go beyond the beltway—in fact, I do not even need to leave my comfortable living room

and LED TV.

As I watched President Biden there speaking in Israel, I felt as if he was animated by some power beyond himself, and beyond his staff, beyond even his political party. Something was sloughing to Jerusalem to be born in the backrooms of private intelligence firms and weapons contractors hidden behind the Stars and Stripes and the Star of David that adorned the stage.

When President Biden stated,

“I come to Israel with a single message: You are not alone. ... As long as the United States stands ... we’re going to stand by your side.”

He was suggesting that some horrific war has already been decided by those hidden powers and now it is time for Arabs, and Jews as well, and Americans, to die in large numbers. If it means the end of Israel and the United States, he hints, so be it. “As long at the United States stands” means “until the United States is destroyed.”

When President Biden stated that,

“If Israel didn’t exist, we would have to invent it.”

The investment banks who have made a fortune by using Israel and its security forces, and security IT, to intimidate others and to increase their profits, they most certainly knew what he meant. For, without doubt, the banks will have to invent a new Israel to do their bidding if this one is destroyed by this apocalypse they have planned out.

But perhaps the most disturbing part of the speech came after Biden said that this was not just “Israel’s 9.11,” it was “fifteen 9.11s.” Most people already know, even if they cannot come out and admit it, that 9.11 was the global military-intelligence-finance complex declaring war on the citizens of the Earth.

To think that this is now going to be 15 times the millions killed in blind wars for profit is truly frightening.

Yes, one can almost sense that evil is lurking somewhere there in the corners of Biden’s forced smile.

And then President Biden described the Israeli response to this “9.11 of their own,” saying,

“I am sure those horrors have tapped into some kind of primal feeling, shock, pain, rage, an all-consuming rage—justice must be done.”

That is to say that an “all-consuming rage” that banishes reason, and stops dead the search for truth, must be the only response possible to this still ambiguous event. That “all-consuming rage” that the commercial media keeps harping on is precisely the door through which the darkest evil can pass unnoticed.

It could be a catastrophic war with Iran—is coming, as Biden implied when he mentioned the movement of military assets such as the USS Ford carrier strike group to the Eastern Mediterranean, to be joined by the aircraft carrier USS Eisenhower.

Most certainly these massive clusters of weapons are not meant to attack the impoverished people huddled in Gaza. They are meant to start bombing Iran at any moment.



The more I thought about this terrible turn of events, the more I was drawn back to the elegant speech that Reverend Martin Luther King delivered on April 4, 1967, exactly one year before he was assassinated, one of the most powerful speeches delivered in American history.

When Dr. King delivered the speech “Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence” at Riverside Church in New York City, he revealed to all the true form of a thoughtful and committed man of God who had wrestled with evil, tried to make a deal with lesser evils, and then was forced to come to the painful conclusion that it was his moral duty to break his studied silence about that project of death because it had infected every corner of American society.

Dr. King used the expression “Beyond Vietnam” because he knew that the illness was a spiritual one and it went far beyond the specifics of Vietnam. He did not want to get lost in the details. He spoke to the point,

“The war in Vietnam is but a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit, and if we ignore this sobering reality we will find ourselves organizing “clergy- and laymen-concerned committees” for the next generation.



President John F. Kennedy and his wife, Jacqueline, in the rear of a limousine before reaching Dealey Plaza in Dallas on the day he was assassinated. Associated Press

"The words of the late John F. Kennedy come back to haunt us. Five years ago he said, 'Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable.'

"Increasingly, by choice or by accident, this is the role our nation has taken — the role of those who make peaceful revolution impossible by refusing to give up the privileges and the pleasures that come from the immense profits of overseas investment.

"I am convinced that if we are to get on the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values.

"We must rapidly begin the shift from a 'thing-oriented' society to a 'person-oriented' society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.

"A true revolution of values will look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth. With righteous indignation, it will look across the seas and see individual capitalists of the West investing huge sums of money in Asia, Africa and South America, only to take the profits out with no concern for the social betterment of the countries, and say: 'This is not just.'"

I had the arrogance and the self-conceit, the confidence and the craftiness to imagine myself as a president. And yet, heeding Dr. King's words, I must say as that as I witnessed President Biden invoking a new world war like a vengeful god, I felt that must also say, and say loudly and clearly, that this, my brothers and sisters, this is not just.

We are opening the doors for untold evil to spill out over the world, and the cynical backroom boys are betting that we will convince ourselves that because we were not directly involved in this first step of the war, therefore somehow we think that we are not responsible.

Sadly, history will judge us quite differently.

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Featured image: President Joe Biden participates in a restricted bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the Hotel Kempinski in Tel Aviv, Israel, Wednesday, October 18, 2023. (Official White House Photo by Cameron Smith)

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