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# Finley: Hamas taps into Jewish nightmare



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The vicious attack Hamas unleashed on Israel last weekend differs from previous terrorist strikes in more ways than just its massive scope.

It touched the genocidal nightmare that troubles the sleep of every Jew and brings to the surface inherited memories of the Cossacks' hoofbeats and the Gestapo's cattle cars.

"It's a modern-day manifestation of all the horrors Jews have endured throughout history," says Rabbi Eli Mayerfeld, chief executive of the Zekelman Holocaust Center in Farmington Hills. "It was a deliberate attempt to evoke their generational trauma, that age-old feeling of not being safe in their own homes."

Terrorism is generally less personal in its execution. A suicide bomber detonates himself in a public square. An explosive goes off in a bus or night club. A gunman fires shots into a crowd. A truck mows down pedestrians.

In most cases, the victims never knew what hit them, or who.

This time, those who were slaughtered could see the evil in the eyes of their murderers as their throats were slit and their families gunned down.

Monsters who, in making war on civilians, mutilate bodies and display them in the streets, are out to do more than just kill. Their intent is to degrade and dehumanize, to destroy the confidence of people in their own survivability.

"Hebrew has a companion word for Shalom, which means peace," Mayerfeld says. "And that is Shalvah, which means serenity, the feeling of trust that lets you go to sleep at night."

"That's what the terrorists were attempting to take away. They were trying to conjure those ghosts, those bad dreams that haunt the Jewish people."

Those capable of carrying out such atrocities are not driven by a geopolitical agenda. No grievance justifies the cold-blooded killing of a baby. They are propelled by a contempt nurtured since childhood that convinces them their victims are less than human.

"The story of the Holocaust was about people making individual decisions to do awful things," Mayerfeld says. "The Hamas terrorists were mimicking that behavior in expressing their hatred of Jews. They feel the Jewish people don't have the right to exist."

Antisemitism is the world's most enduring hatred, a genetic mutation passed through the generations that embeds mankind with an inexplicable urge to "kill the Jews."

That chant rang out across the world last week as Jew haters rallied to defend the Jew killers. In Congress and on college campuses the finger was pointed at Israel for the butchering of its own people.

"Tropes like that go back throughout Jewish history," Mayerfeld says. "'It's the Jews' fault.'" It allows people to justify killing Jews and then glorify it.

"You know what I want? I'd like people to tell me I have a right to exist. That's what they are trying to call into question."

It's a question today's Jews are fighting to positively affirm, as their ancestors did before them. The tragedy is that this time the struggle occurs in a place carved out for Jews as a safe haven from the marauders intent on exterminating their race.

"Never again" has always been a hollow promise. The Jewish people now know for certain fulfilling that vow rests on their shoulders.

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