

**“Echoes of the Heart”**  
*Reflections on Life and Community*  
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**A vision for peace.** As the mindless violence with Israel and Hezbollah plunges, daily, into a deeper and ever-widening abyss, the spirit of the fallen cries out: *where will it all end?* What has to happen to bring a cessation to the endless spiral of death and destruction on both sides?

To be sure, Hezbollah’s terrorist acts toward Israel are contemptible in every regard. Still, Israel’s disproportionate response, resulting in the tragic deaths of hundreds of innocent civilians (many of them children), must be universally condemned as well.

Within the context of radical Islam vs. the West (mainly, the United States, certain countries in Western Europe, and Israel), our strategy of open aggression and retaliatory violence serves only to strengthen and embolden the opposition all the more. At the outset, we need to understand that Israel is loathed with a burning intensity in the most of the Arab/ Muslim world.

I have spoken with countless Muslims and Arabs since 9/11 and every one of them has reiterated—over and over—that at the core of their problem with Israel and the United States is ***Israel/ Palestine*** ... i.e., the way the Israelis are perceived as treating the Palestinians.

Every day in their television news reels and other news media they see vivid pictures of Palestinians (with whom they share both ethnicity and religious persuasion) being dehumanized or marginalized in whatever way.

Because of this and other factors, what we don’t seem to grasp is how *they* (the terrorists that threaten us) have framed the conflict in apocalyptic, religious terms. From their vantage point, both the invasion of Iraq and Israel’s assaults on Hezbollah are attacks on Islam.

**An imaginative alternative: when the servant comes.** If we do a *reality* check: clearly, what we are doing is not working. We cannot simply kill all the terrorists that oppose us, although we must certainly do everything we can to defend ourselves. What we can do is change the *tone* and the *spirit* of the conflict.

Within our Judeo-Christian faith traditions, there is a precedent and a history of the *suffering servant* (Isaiah 53 in the Hebrew Bible, and Jesus of Nazareth and his cross from the Christian Scriptures), who shames the world into more redemptive ways.

The non-violent resistance of Martin Luther King, Jr., as with that of Gandhi in India, was based on this same *suffering servant* impulse. When King and his followers marched and protested in the Civil Rights movement in the late fifties and sixties, they shamed the

world into a more just and equitable society for people—not just people of African heritage, but for all people.

Through their *suffering love*, over time, they compelled the dominant culture to view them in a new light (in a light they should have been seen all along) ... as fully human ... as equally deserving of fair and just consideration under the law.

**The appeal of the *spiritual high ground*.** And because of their non-violent resistance, and the obvious virtue of their ways, they owned the *spiritual high ground*. This was a critical break through, because the *spiritual high ground* has power to change the hearts of people and therein change the world.

Over time, Israel could turn around the mindless nightmare in the Middle East by finding ways of *being* the suffering servant in relation to the Palestinians. This is the key.

Keep in mind: Israel is the strong nation in this inter-relationship. She is dealing from strength in every way, particularly militarily and economically. Imagine how the world would react—again, over time—if Israel were suddenly to embark on a protracted program of generosity and support of the Palestinian cause.

Help them forge out a state. Help them begin to eradicate their wrenching, widespread poverty. Help them build an infrastructure. And all the while (within reasonable limits), resist over-reacting to any continued suicide bombings and violence with an eye-for-an-eye impulse of retaliation.

In other words, take the spiritual high road. Suicide bombings, as horrific as they are, are acts of desperation. Therefore, remove the despair. Address the causes, not the symptoms, of the tension.

In time, through world opinion and the sheer power of *suffering love* to redeem the world, Palestinian violence towards Israel would dissipate and all but fade away.

And rather than lead to the world toward oblivion (realizing the hopes of some of the *rapture-crazed* Christian evangelicals across the land), Israel could be a leader and an example in the dawning of a new day and a new peace.