

Mene, mene, tekel

Sharon's Decision Wall¹

Many have made the point that good fences make good neighbours, and have thus sought to justify the building of a wall between Israelis and non-Israeli Palestinians. Many others have pointed out that a fence built along the wrong border can lead to trouble, and that no fence should be built until Israelis and Palestinians can agree on where the border is drawn. Agreement or not, Israel appears determined to build a wall, and many believe that it is a good idea. As there is little the Palestinians can do to prevent it, is it not then likely that the wall will be completed? Moreover, where the border is drawn and the wall is built, will be determined largely by the Israelis. This is because there are few in power, either inside or outside of Israel, who care enough about the fate of Palestinians to interfere. Palestine has yet to produce an Albert Einstein or a George Soros, and human rights issues simply cannot stand abreast with the United States' *free pursuit* of wealth and power.

So long as the United States remains on the side of the Israelis, and continues to offer protection to oil-rich Arab governments, no Arab nation will strike against the Israelis, either together or alone. As most everyone else condemns Palestine's only viable method of self-defence, non-Arab nations are also unlikely to take significant action against the Israelis. This does not mean that unarmed Israeli citizens will be spared so-called acts of terror once the wall is completed, however. Nor does it mean that Palestinians living inside the wall will suffer less discrimination. Does it mean that Israelis will stop their attacks on non-Israeli Palestinians living outside the wall? It is very unlikely. What it does mean, is the number of suicide bombing incidents inside Israel will be significantly fewer, because the wall will prevent forceful entry into Israel from the non-Israeli Palestinian side. Accordingly, Israeli-Palestinians will not want to see their already fragile situation compromised further, and will be reluctant to support armed Palestinians inside the wall. Certainly the Israeli government will want to protect those who refuse to provide them asylum.

The wall can also serve another important role, in so far as it will force recalcitrant Israeli settlers to either seek protection behind it or fend for themselves outside it. In short, the Israeli government will not have to force anyone to relocate, because everyone seeking government protection will move without having to be told. The Israeli government has merely to state that protection is guaranteed to those living inside the wall, and that those who live beyond it, do so at their own risk. Except for paying the cost of relocation and the re-establishment of uprooted Israeli colonists the government can then wash its hands of further obligation and trouble with regard to its own citizenry.

Once the wall is completed, the Israeli government can also purge armed Palestinians without fear of tit-for-tat retaliation against unarmed Israeli civilians, and complete its war of oppression free of recrimination from Israelis who criticise it for begetting violence. In effect, the battle will be waged solely between Israeli soldiers, recalcitrant Israeli settlers, and Palestinian militia. Palestinian civilian casualties will surely continue, if not increase. Moreover, the war will be waged entirely on Palestinian soil designated by the Israeli government. Acts of revenge will be limited to attacks on Israeli soldiers and

¹ The phrase "Mene, mene, tekel" is ancient Aramaic for "It has been counted, counted, and weighed". They are three of the four words written on a wall interpreted by Daniel in the Old Testament. They prophesied the fall of a Middle East king named Belshazzar. Please see <http://www.bartleby.com/65/me/Mene-Men.html> for a modest, but reliable starting point.

stubborn Israeli settlers outside the wall. As Israeli civilians can no longer be made to suffer what Palestinians civilians must endure, the will to support Palestinian militia groups on the part of Palestinian civilians both inside and outside the wall will diminish. Supporting the militia groups will no longer be rewarded with sympathetic acts of revenge, and not supporting them will lead to backlash from militia groups who view non-supporters as traitors. Thus, most Palestinians will tacitly side in disgust with the Israelis, oblige their militant counterparts when compelled, and painfully wait while they watch their own heroic compatriots crushed.

It will be a sad finish for all of Palestine, but alas a peaceful solution will have been found. Is this not the likely peace that the Sharon government is seeking? Will it not continue to provoke all of Palestine until the wall is completed? Is it not a forced peace, the same or worse than that which Yassir Arafat so wisely or unwisely declined at Camp David three years ago?

Can such an outcome be avoided? Certainly not by following the present course of non-action and rhetoric on the part of the US government; rather, by working with Jews inside and outside the United States and Israel to force the Likud and current US administration out of power.

If it is not worth the sacrifice in pride on the part of Arabs and non-Arabs to associate with reasonable Jews, then what is? A peace without honour may remove Palestine from the world news, but it will not remove Israel from the Middle East, where it will continue to serve as a well-deserved source of political contention long into the future. As the Osama bin Ladens of our world will not go away until the conditions that nurture them have disappeared, what choice have we left. Recent events have shown that no one is free of Islamic wrath -- not even the Arab world.

Best wishes for the New Year!

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