

JOHN FENZEL



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Two Enemies



You may not have heard of Rabbi Arnold E. Resnicoff, but if you get the opportunity to listen to him speak, you should go out of your way to do so. His military career began as a line officer in the rivers of the Mekong Delta, followed by assignments with Naval Intelligence in Europe. As a Navy chaplain, Resnicoff was present in Beirut, Lebanon during the 1983 truck-bomb attack that claimed the lives of 241 U.S. Marines. He was asked by then Vice-President George Bush to send a report of the attack and rescue effort to the White House. I've had the privilege of listening to Chaplain Resnicoff on several occasions. His message is at once both powerful and extremely poignant. He's given many speeches to a wide variety of audiences over many years--and every time his audience is transfixed, and leaves with their perspectives forever changed. Here is one of those speeches.

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Rules For Our Sake, Not For Our Enemies Arnold E. Resnicoff

In the past, even assassins had rules. When Russian revolutionaries went to bomb Grand Duke Sergei, a Czarist official, the plan was aborted because his children were with him. In *The Just Assassins*, Camus' play based on that incident, one terrorist explains, "Even in destruction, there's a right way and a wrong way--and there are limits." For terrorists today, there's no wrong way, and no limits.

Fighting fire with fire is a natural response--but that's what the terrorists want. They want their philosophy validated: the ends justify the means. And they want to manipulate our response. When terrorists linked to the National Liberation Front in Algeria made plans to blow up a school bus in Algeria, French image, not French children, was the target. And when all the non-French in the area of the attack became immediate suspects, that served as proof for the terrorist claim that racism--not "fraternity, liberty, equality"--was the value that drove French actions.

In the rivers of Vietnam, I learned to value outrage, because it reminded me I was still human, not yet numb to pain and horror. Rage was what I feared, for it could destroy the humanity I still cherished. Rage destroys our moral compass--and allows us to be manipulated by those who want us to lose our way.

Even without manipulation, it is difficult to maintain our values in the face of violence. "When you go to war," my Commanding Officer once said, "you fight two enemies, not one. The internal enemy is the animal within. Fight both enemies, or no one will know the players without a scorecard. Fight both, or we'll remember how to fight, but not what it was that we were fighting for." Of course, war is not the same as peace. But war and peace can never be completely separate. Either we hold on to as many values as we can or our humanity dies even if our bodies survive. Today's military values force protection, hoping our troops will survive the battle. But we pray that not only our bodies survive unbroken.

Former prisoners of war learned the lesson of spiritual force protection. Others, like Victor Frankl, learned it in the death camps. Those who did not adapt did not last. But those who abandoned all values ultimately abandoned all hope, sometimes saving their lives at the cost of their minds--or their souls. The challenge was to avoid extremes, and--perhaps like Jacob wrestling with the angel--to struggle; to wrestle with faith and the future.

We must understand that our values are under attack because they are part of our strength. Terrorists fear our power, beginning with our image. For cynics, perception never matters--but Judaism values *maarit ayin*, how things look.



Terrorists try to destroy our values because we pose a threat to their vision of a world at war. In Beirut, I said that we Americans had the only interfaith foxholes in the Middle East. If the world had more interfaith foxholes, perhaps there would be less of a need altogether for foxholes. The hard-boiled egg at the Pesach seder symbolizes our strength under pressure--the more the egg is cooked the harder it gets; the harder our times, the stronger we become. As Americans, we will find our strength during these hard times. As we pursue our response, we must maintain our outrage, acknowledging that some of our, or our enemy's, actions will never be acceptable. And we must fight the rage that distorts the importance of our own values.

Tradition teaches us that spilling drops of wine during the seder reminds us to refrain from rejoicing when our enemy suffers. We must embrace such traditions--and as Americans, we must find ways to incorporate such rituals into our lives.

A professor once told me, "just because there are no right answers does not mean that there are no wrong answers." Exactly what the rules should be as we respond to terrorism remains unclear. But we must, at least, understand the wrong answers of both extremes: all past rules remain unchanged, and in this fight, no rules apply at all. We must fight to keep our values, not for the sake of the enemy, but for our own sake. We must fight this war against terrorism hard and we must fight smart. But through it all we must fight two enemies, not one. Limits must exist. And in the end we will know why we had to fight--and who we are when we come home.



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