

There is no peace for the wicked

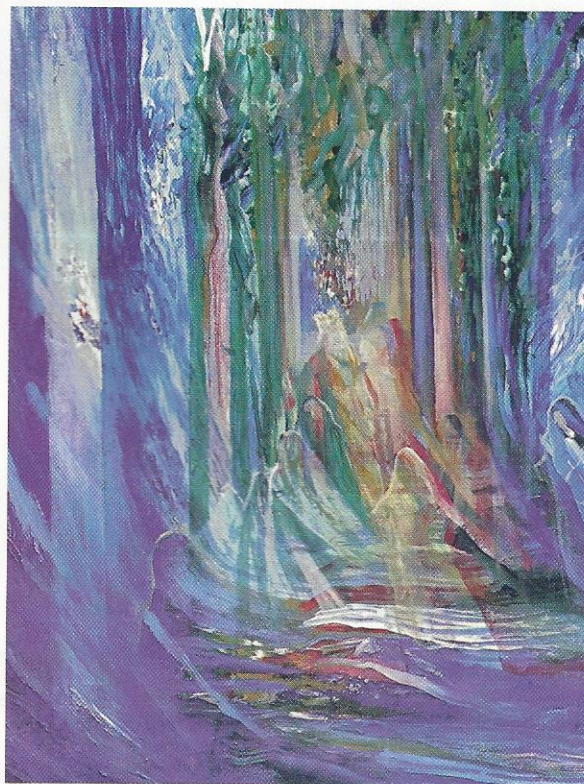
WRITTEN BY
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The prophet Isaiah, (Is. 48:22) declared:

"There is no peace" says the L-rd, "for the wicked."

Is it a fact that there are no evildoers who seem to lead fairly happy lives? One of the better known answers to this question is, that while outwardly the wicked may prosper, a peace of mind they do not have. Or as the cynical saying would have it, "Good people sleep better during the night than bad people, but, during the day it is the bad people who have much more fun." However, the claim that evildoers are punished by having a bad conscience may apply only to the moderately wicked, who have still some conscience left to disturb their nocturnal rest. The top-of-the line monsters are immune to the pangs of conscience. Indeed Alan Bullock in his monumental work, reports Stalin confiding to one of his cronies, that his way of ensuring a refreshing night's sleep is to select carefully his next victim and decide upon the way he should be liquidated. No, Stalin was far beyond the reach of remorse.

Yet even during his earthly existence he did not entirely go scot-free. Though we may say that he was not punished for his crimes, he was punished to some extent by his crimes. On several occasions he suffered gravely the inevitable consequences of his depravity. In the late thirties, after he had murdered virtually all the original leaders of the party, he initiated the wholesale purge of the armed forces, killing thousands of officers. The outcome was a precariously enfeebled Red Army. Thus when Hitler struck, Stalin himself was convinced that the decimated, demoralized forces at his disposal cannot stand up to the Germans. As we know, he had a nervous



IN THE KING'S COURT, 1994.
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breakdown; he locked himself in his room from where he did not emerge for a whole week, during which the USSR suffered catastrophic losses.

We may also be reminded that for three days preceding his death, he was afflicted with excruciating pain. The reason: due to his morbid suspicion, based on the knowledge of his own utterly treacherous nature, he refused all medical help, if not to cure him at least alleviate to some degree his agony. Being aware that millions were yearning for his death, he was unable to trust any offer of treatment.

The steep decline and the crashing fall of the arch-malefactor, Hitler, offers many instructive illustrations of self-induced pun-

ishment. I shall cite two of these. The first being that, to many, it seemed obvious during 1940-1941, that there was no hope for preventing the Germans from winning the war. Indeed, had Hitler not committed some of the most incredible blunders, Nazi victory would have been assured. For example, when the Germans started the invasion of Russia, millions of people, who for over a decade had suffered the horrors of Stalin's brutal oppressions, actually welcomed the Wehrmacht on whom they looked as their liberators. The following is an excerpt from an account of a German cavalry officer of how eagerly in the early stages of the Nazi onslaught did the populace welcome their conquerors:

"The reception we received from civilians was astonishingly cordial. Entering the villages we were greeted as liberators... The local population showed genuine kindness towards the German troops and pinned great hopes on our arrival. Everywhere we went we were greeted with bread and salt, the traditional Slav symbol of hospitality."

Any sensible German leader would have seized this great opportunity; he would have treated the conquered territories with comparative leniency, at least temporarily, and postponed the implementation of the atrocious fate he may have planned for them till the end of fighting. It was the obvious dictate of elementary common sense, not to deal harshly with the civilian population and promise them freedom and prosperity as soon as it becomes possible after the hostilities will have stopped. Many of the fiercely resentful downtrodden masses would have gladly joined forces to bring the Communist regime down. Instead, Hitler, blinded by his bloodthirsty temperament, was unable to delay executing his plans for mass murder and plunder, instructed his henchmen to treat those inferior Slavic races with unprecedented brutality. Thus, after a few weeks, the Russian nation with very little exception began to grasp that what they were facing, was not merely something else than a war of liberation, but that it was a war of extermination. Consequently, it looked reasonable to them choosing to defend their own monstrous leader rather than come under the rule of an even more vicious tyrant.

Now why did Hitler mindlessly turn masses of friendly population against himself when they were only too anxious to be his allies? He was smart enough to discover the existence of a superb opportunity to win a quick victory. Clearly, the answer is that violent emotions are bound to prevent even the brightest person from acting in accordance with reason. The venom that filled Hitler's mind made the urge to kill millions of members of subhuman races irresistible. Thus his logical faculties were befogged, his eyes blinded through the twisted, fierce emotions that held him captive. Hitler could have defeated the Soviet Union in a matter of weeks and thus become the ruler of an empire of unprecedented vastness. Instead, his hate-ridden, and thus, malfunctioning mind produced gross miscalculations and brought upon himself the punishment of total defeat.

The following is the second illustration: In one of his speeches Hitler declared, "Our national politics will not be revoked or modified, even for scientists. If the dismissal of Jewish scientists means the annihilation of German science, then we shall have to do without science for a few years."

Science used to be one of the greatest glories of Germany. The persecution of the Jews made Germany fall far behind Great Britain and the U.S.A. Hitler knew this but managed to convince himself that it does not matter. In fact, of course, it made a fatal difference. There was fear in this country that the Nazis might develop an atom bomb before the Allies did. Had they indeed succeeded in building a few atom bombs even as late as 1945, Hitler then, in spite of his many catastrophic miscalculations, and in spite of the immense losses both his army and civil population had suffered, could have annihilated tens of millions of people and forced his enemies to surrender. Had the Germans been able to put together a powerful team like the team working on the Manhattan project, (the members of which incidentally, with one exception of Fermi, happened to be all Jewish) none of us would be here. Were it not for the dismissal of Jewish scientists this could very well have happened.

It is truly mind-boggling that a suppos-

edly infallible leader, whose pronouncements many millions revered as genuine prophecies, should exhibit such brainlessness as to scoff at the power of science!

Thus, while these days, unlike in the days of Pharaoh, no supernatural plagues are inflicted upon the wicked, they cannot calmly look forward to a care-free life; "there is no peace for the wicked." They are subject to natural punishment. Punishment that is self-inflicted as it is a natural consequence of their own doings. The added mind of one who has permitted himself to be ruled by his passions is bound to surrender much of his reasoning capacity, and thus lose his protection against self-destructive behavior.

On the other hand, while punishment may not be administered for evil acts, it does spring from the evil act. That is, there is punishment by the evil act itself. Thus, on the one hand, "there is no peace for the wicked," since he has permitted his passions to rule over him, he is bound to surrender some of his reasoning capacity, thus dropping his guard against unwise behavior. ■

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