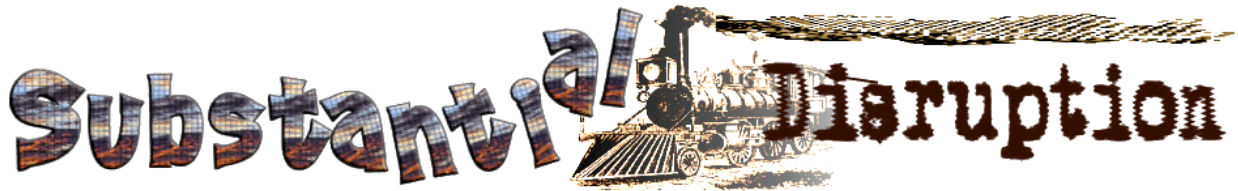


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“Kill Them All”

By Mike Tully

Israel, Gaza, and original sin

Years ago, something a co-worker said left me speechless. It was decades ago, but I hear the words again as I follow the ongoing violence in Israel and Gaza: “Kill them all!”

My co-worker, who was also a friend, was more of a passivist than a warrior. We shared liberal beliefs and attitudes, opposed the war in Vietnam, enjoyed the music and diversions of the times (the mid-1970s), and generally saw the world in similar ways. But when our conversation wandered into Israeli – Arab relations, I saw something else: an otherwise fair and gentle person who uttered “Kill them all,” referring to Arabs. My friend was Jewish.

Our conversation was suddenly no longer about current events. Something deeper and darker had taken over. When my co-worker’s lips moved, history spoke.

Kill them all.

I haven’t seen or spoken with my old co-worker for many years. The aging process has a way of turning down the heat, so perhaps the “Kill them all!” attitude has been supplanted with some degree of tolerance, even acceptance. If so, were the demons reawakened on October 7th?

I heard echoes of the “Kill them all!” comment when Benjamin Netanyahu [invoked some of the most violent rhetoric in the Bible](#), comparing Hamas to Amalek, a rival of ancient Israel. “You must remember what Amalek has done to you, says our Holy Bible,” he stated upon Israeli’s invasion of Gaza. “And we do remember.”

“This is what the Lord Almighty says,” according to the prophet Samuel. “I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel when they waylaid them as they came up from Egypt. Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy all that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.”

Kill them all.

Hamas and Israel have made Amalekites of each other. Both sides, in their own way, have put to death men, women, children and infants, as well as domesticated animals. But there is nothing Biblical about the current slaughter. There is nothing historical about it either, although both sides wrap their killing within the cloak of historical imperative, claiming a right to the same land. There is a more fundamental cause behind the slaughter.

Hatred.

Netanyahu claims to defend the state of Israel and its way of life, but he rapidly devolved from defender to aggressor. When I see two-thousand-pound bombs fall in a dense urbanized setting, when I read that nearly half of Israel's bombs are imprecise "dumb" bombs, I don't see a military defense strategy; I see a primal scream with artillery.

Kill them all.

Hamas' October 7th terrorist attack that sparked the conflagration was hate undiluted. It was a match tossed on history's kindling, reigniting smoldering ashes that many hoped had cooled. The ancient land where Israelis and Palestinians are falling has become a volcano, spreading hatred around the planet like toxic ash. Anti-Semitism, the world's longest smoldering ember, is aflame in Europe, on college campuses, in the defacement of Synagogues and assaults on Jews.

Kill them all.

Hatred is the language of aggression, and aggression is our original sin. The evolutionary imperative imbued an aggressive species, *Homo sapiens sapiens*, with a large and complex brain. But that brain, impressive as it is, straddles the duller intellect of the primitive who kept the species alive through violence and killing. It's development did not result in a superior species. It resulted in a primitive species with a very large brain. That species, with its comingling of the savage and the intellectual, shows more aptitude for self-annihilation than self-preservation.

Kill them all.

And that is our problem as a species. We explore the heavens while dancing with death on Earth. We create symphonies, literature, and technology, yet spill blood relentlessly. Our massive brain has not yet learned to tame the savage.

Netanyahu speaks of strategy, but he is driven by hatred. That is also the case with Hamas. While the leaders of Israel and Gaza talk of history and territoriality, they are speaking the language of aggression. The vocabulary of aggression is hate.

I spent much of my life studying and trying to prevent bullying, a common expression of human aggression. It is the most Sisyphean task I have attempted. Whether training teachers and administrators to recognize, restrain and prevent bullying in schools, or authoring a workplace bullying policy for Pima County, Arizona, I was aware that I brought a modern ethos to a primeval reality. The primitive lurks just below the surface.

I came to realize I could not eliminate bullying. But there were things I could do – that others can do – to keep the primitive at bay. The survival of our species depends on our ability to suppress the primitive until our massive, modern brain takes control once and for all. If the brain is unable to suppress the primitive, we are doomed.

Witness the horror in Israel, Gaza, Ukraine, Afghanistan, Yemen and elsewhere. That is what doomed looks like. And this is what it sounds like:

Kill them all.