



"Never mistake motion for action."

—Ernest Hemingway

**21-Jun-02**

## A World Gone Mad

The reader may recall the 1963 movie called *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World* in which a bunch of misfits alternatively race, ally with, and fight each other to find a buried treasure. After various hilarious adventures and mishaps, they find the treasure and—after a melee over the loot—wind up in the hospital ward. It made for big laughs onscreen, but it is no laughing matter that this is how the real world has seemed to me at times over the past ten years.

There may be no finer example of this than the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Nothing makes sense, and the reactions of politicians and military leaders are laughable and pitiful at the same time. Recall how pleased [the world](#) was when Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat allowed Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to shake his hand in the East Room of the White House in 1995! [Peace](#) at last, peace at last!

No, The Handshake meant nothing. It was all form, no substance. The agreement gave the Palestinians greater self-rule and laid the foundation for the present intifada that spews out death to handfuls of Israeli citizens every few days. Though designed to decrease the hostility between the two peoples, it instead gave the Palestinians impetus to make more demands and

ratchet up the frequency of terrorist strikes against the seemingly weakening Israelis.

Nevertheless, the world press gave kudos to American President Bill Clinton, Arafat, and Rabin for their wonderful intentions, for intentions are everything. Results mean nothing. It only matters that we try, not that we succeed.

In July 2000, Clinton brought Arafat and another Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Barak, to Camp David for another powwow. Clinton, wanting an international affairs legacy that would obscure his tarnished domestic image, strong-armed Barak into conceding the whole store—all the land the Palestinians had asked for—to Arafat. No, said the man in the world-famous *kufiyah*, we would rather be seen as victims by the rest of the world, get the world's sympathy, and force them into giving us not just what you offer but the rest of your territory and lots of money too. And, by the way, I will go home and tell my suicide brigades to begin composing notes to leave behind.

So began the incessant tit-for-tat we have witnessed over the past two years with its resulting deaths and casualties in the multiple hundreds on each side. It is now not uncommon to wake up to reports of another suicide (or homicide) bombing in Jerusalem or Tel Aviv that has killed several Israelis, including women and children. Then we hear that the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) has retaliated by taking out certain known terrorists, bomb factories, administration buildings, or other important Palestinian assets. Is this not a kind of madness?

Now the Israeli government has decided to retake and reoccupy parts of the West Bank after each new act of Palestinian terror. More madness! Though the IDF is probably among the world's best armies, it does not have the manpower to succeed in this course of action. Further, if it tries to do this, how many more Jenins will the world's press uncover? Israel is in a no-win situation. Everything it does fails to solve its problem, and doing nothing courts further atrocities.

Another act of madness is President George W. Bush's plan—really the U.S. State Department's plan pushed by Secretary of State Colin Powell—to fashion an "interim" or "temporary" state of Palestine. This, they assure us,

will move the peace process along. It will? When has any concession made the prospects for peace any better? A look at the statistics shows that violence and death have risen after each of the past agreements between the Israelis and the Palestinians. And when has anything "temporary" like this ever ended? It will be so temporary as to be permanent! Is this progress or madness?

This plan will only legitimize terrorism as a means to self-determination. All any group has to do is kill enough innocent people, and the world will cave in and give it what it wants. Is that not a lesson we can take from this? Will not "Palestine" be able to form a legitimate army, buy arms legitimately, make alliances, complain to the UN as a state (though the Palestinian Authority and the PLO before it have done this without the virtue of statehood), and keep the IDF behind its own borders (in fear of world opinion against "invading" another nation)? Will not this granting of nationhood encourage the Palestinians to demand more—just as they have done after every other concession?

Isaac Newton discovered that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. We can see this in world affairs, particularly in the drama that is the Holy Land. Each action and reaction plunges the world into a deeper morass of madness that no human will ever be able to cure. The prophet Malachi, however, gives us hope of a healing not too far in the future:

"For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up," says the LORD of hosts, "that will leave them neither root nor branch. But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings. . . ."   
(Malachi 4:1-2)

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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## From the Archives: Featured Sermon

## **Every Action Has a Reaction**

by John W. Ritenbaugh

The little things we do make big impacts in the grand scheme of things; little things make a big difference. Corollaries of this "little things count" principle include: 1) In the reproductive process, there is a powerful tendency toward increase. 2) Every action has a corresponding reaction. 3) We reap what we sow. 4) The fruit produced will be more than what was sown. Sin produces increase (the leavening effect) just as righteousness does. In carnal human nature, there is no impediment to sin. Sin has an addictive, drug-like quality that requires more and more to satisfy. Degeneracy (as a consequence of natural law) is exponentially incremental. Like Achon's "hidden" transgression, what we do in secret eventually comes to light, making an impact on the whole body.

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## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

### **A Stone Named Jerusalem**

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

The Catholic Church did not forbid keeping the Passover until AD 325. The controversy over Passover or Easter boils down to either following Scripture or Roman tradition.

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