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**Religious roots for modern-day hatred**

My grandmother lived in Isfahan, Iran. Whenever she wanted to fetch some milk for her family, she would go on a short walk to meet a Muslim woman called Khadija.

She would then milk Khadija's cow, just as other customers would do, but with one exception: She would pretend to be Muslim. If any of the other clients found out that a Jew touched the teats, they would never come back.

The Iranians had a term for the impurity of Jews: "najes." If you were a Jew, you could not touch the merchandise at the bazaar or make physical contact with the shopkeeper. If you unwittingly did that, people would start whispering "najes" all over, to remind you that you had violated the proper code of conduct.

While the term encapsulated much less hatred toward the Jews than Nazi ideology, there were some similarities and Iran's Jews have been persecuted for hundreds of years. Although they were never sent to concentration camps, the view of the Jews as an inferior and impure race has become part and parcel of Iranian life.

This view has theological and metaphysical roots: It is Allah (God) who declared the Jews to be impure, not any specific regime or leader. Shia Islam, unlike Sunni Islam, views the Jewish impurity as an abstract but constant idea, as if it was one of the concepts mentioned in Plato's Theory of Ideas.

To understand Iran's buildup along Israel's borders, one must remember Khadija's cow: Transacting with Jews is one thing, but letting Jews hold power over Islamic endowments, waqfs, is something different altogether. When the najes becomes a sovereign and an occupying power that usurps sacred Muslim grounds, something new emerges: a determination to annihilate the Jews. This is a convergence of Shiite and Nazi ideology.

Iran's motivation to wipe Israel off the map is hardly trivial. Shiites are a minority in the Muslim world. Their historical narrative has been defined by the martyrdom of the person who they believed should have succeeded the Prophet Muhammad: his cousin Ali. This schism and the sense of being sidelined by the Sunni majority in Islam for centuries has resulted in constant score-settling within Islam.

But taking action against the State of Israel takes precedence over this 1,300 intra-Islamic schism. In recent days, some people have insisted that Israel must not use excessive force and bring about an escalation lest we destroy the holy equilibrium they espouse with Iran. Taking a page from John Lennon, they imagine the region without borders, because Iranians are, like us, humans.

These are the same people who cried foul when Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke before the U.S. Congress to warn against Iran's nuclearization. They are behaving recklessly, perhaps because they are ill-informed.

We must make sure two things do not happen: Iran must not have a nuclear bomb and it must not become entrenched along Israel's borders. Iran is slowly but surely on course toward reaching those goals, and Israel has not been able to stop it.

Israel must seize every opportunity to establish deterrence against this determined enemy. In this game of chess, Israel's adversary could not care less about Lennon's vision. As far as it is concerned, we may all be humans but the Jews are an impure race and the Zionists must die. This enemy must not deploy on our borders; it is best if we let it bleed on our borders.

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