

Mission Ready

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Adjusting to Hatred

One of the most noticeable characteristics of the Israelis Dan interviewed, in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, was a very healthy attitude towards being the target of genocidal hatred. It wasn't something they pondered over; they didn't rack their brains trying to get to the "reasons" for the hostility their very existence evokes in the minds of millions of neighbors. Instead, they go about their daily lives fully aware that there are those who would kill them without a second thought, if only given the chance. What struck Dan about the Israelis he met was their almost cheerful acceptance of hatred, and the deep confidence they have in their own values.

No one in America, practically speaking, has grown up with such an awareness; it has been thrust upon us. Nationally broadcast, color coded terror thresholds are startlingly new to everyday life. It is clear that the American attitude towards the rest of the world is changing—from an admittedly naïve and benign indifference, to a much more vigilant and proactive interest in developing threats. Until the attack on 9/11, most Americans would have expressed surprise and dismay at the thought of

being hated, simply for being Americans. Even after the attack, many of us asked "Why?" "What," we wondered, "have we done to incur the wrath of so many people?" Some of us are still working through the novel concept of being a target of passionate hatred.

The acceptance of being the target of hated represents a profound psychological adjustment, as well as an irrevocable loss of innocence. Many Americans, for the first time in their lives, are facing a fact of life that even the World War II generation did not have to grapple with (unless they happened to be Jewish). Knowing that somebody out there hates you, and knowing, furthermore, that there is nothing you can do, or should do, to dissuade the "hater," creates a certain adult state of mind. Regrettably, some of the endearing American qualities, such as giving the benefit of the doubt towards a stranger, have, by necessity, been replaced by a frank candor. We Americans do not like being hated, but many of us are adjusting to the phenomenon, by drawing closer to national values—rather than trying to change ourselves in an effort to compromise with evil.