

## ***Will it Work or Will it Backfire?***

The Democrats have chosen what seems like a brilliant strategy, looking at it afar while traveling in Israel. They are running against Donald Trump. He is the candidate. In fact, he is every candidate at every level. The Democrats have done their polling and they believe that being as outrageous about Trump as he was about every Democrat is what the American people want!

Let us be honest about all of this. The pollsters, the psychologists and the advisors understand that the voter and Americans in general want red meat. And they are getting it! Trump rose to national prominence by being as obnoxious, unpleasant and dramatically aggressive as possible. It was a new low in American politics. However, in the eyes of Democrats, it worked. Not only did it give Trump the Electoral College, but it brought along lots of Republican officeholders throughout the country.

Now, fast forward to 2022, post Covid, and Joe Biden is being used as Mouthpiece in Chief to excoriate Trump and the Republicans, those awful Make American Great Again people, just the way Trump dumped on the Democrats. It worked for the Republicans and therefore why should it not work for the Democrats? What is the Republican response to all this? To cry foul, to whine and to do exactly what the Democrats did when they were being attacked by Trump. The Republicans are saying that Democrats do not like or believe in democracy.

There is something funny and almost pathetic looking at the American electoral scene from afar. Each party is claiming that the other does not like or believe in democracy. Both sides are claiming that the represent the true America and that the opposition are about as alien and dangerous as invaders from Mars. It matters not that the majority of Americans are still fairly moderate and in the middle. Most Americans, like most people in the world, want good jobs, economic security, education for their children, healthcare and a safe place to live and to grow. However, civil wars have a way of ramping up enthusiasm among voters.

All the talk in America, says the Israeli press, is about civil war. The concept of civil war as motivating Americans has gained some traction. What is it that Americans like about civil wars? We waged one from 1860 to 1865 or thereabouts and, of course, during reconstruction, we waged another civil war. We waged a civil war between labor and big business during the industrial revolution. We waged a civil war even before the real civil war which was a split between north and south over economic and governmental control issues. So, another civil war is not so crazy or unusual in America. In fact, it seems like the American way.

Given that American politics has a way of spreading, like a virus, to other nations, the question for Israelis and others is whether their civil war mentality will spread throughout the world? Israel is now locked in an electoral process between leftwing and middle or rightwing. It is a little difficult to figure out what Israeli politicians believe, since there are so many parties and many of the Israeli politicians are given to party hopping at the drop of a feather. Benjamin Netanyahu, BB, seems wed to Likud. There are those that see Likud as a washed out, middle of the road party that talks like conservatives and acts like liberals. There are lots of parties in this country to the left and to the right of

Likud. Talking slogans and trashing opponents is certainly not foreign to the American system. The parliamentary system, with its multiplicity of parties, identification with issues rather than persons and lack of gigantic sums of money infused into campaigns has something of a different goal. Most individuals run as party animals and the party, in Israel, is about ideology.

In America, ideology seems to have slipped away and the issue is all about personalities and who is more dangerous for our longstanding and generally healthy democracy.

I had a friend who served as a lobbyist in Washington, D.C. for 10 years. He then moved to Israel and served as a lobbyist in the Holy Land for about 10 years. At lunch, I asked him how the two systems were different. He said he had never thought about that and then he gave it a few minutes of contemplation. He said that in the United States, it was all about money. Whoever had the biggest pocketbook, got the attention of the politicians. In Israel, it was all about personalities and "who you know." In Israel, money is not permitting to exercise a vote, as it does in the United States Supreme Court. Our highest court has equated the spending of money with free speech. Not so Israel. As a result, relationships become much more important than money, although money certainly has its place and position in the Israeli scheme of things.

I asked my friend which he thought was more corrosive, the influence of money or the influence of internal power politics? He said that without question, the damage which money causes to democratic principles and institutions is more dangerous than connections based upon personal relationships. The latter is how people work generally. Everything in life is about our relationships with other people. However, when money controls who runs and who wins, then the ideology of a republican form of government based upon democratic principles eviscerates.

America, as Israelis tend to call the United States, is no longer the positive example to the world that it once was. It is now seen as a wealthy country smitten by internal disputes and vicious attacks by and between politicians which are destroying the American dream. Our leadership has waned, and our principles have been sidelined. We in America need to realize that our emphasis on money and electoral campaigns and destructive attacks on one another is leading our great nation down the path of irrelevancy.

Let us wake up, America, and reclaim our moral and philosophical high ground. We have lots of threats external, much to do to rebuild our nation internally and little time for destructive disputes between ambitious politicians.

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