

The Atrocities of Hamas and the Reality of Evil

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Articles

Examining different worldviews of evil and why we must work and pray to bring God's right understanding in this moment.

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On Saturday morning, October 7, in a highly coordinated attack on Israel, the Islamic terrorist group Hamas fired thousands of rockets, overwhelming the nation's Iron Dome defense system, and sent hundreds of heavily armed militants, breaching the border. In addition to soldiers at military outposts, civilians, including women and children, were also targeted, in neighborhoods, at bus stops, and at public events. By the end of the day, at least 900 Israelis had been killed and 100 kidnapped, making it the worst day of slaughter of Jews since the Holocaust. Images and videos poured in from the attack, documenting atrocities that are difficult to stomach.

Though some have likened this to 9/11, as Joel Rosenberg pointed out, for Israel's population of fewer than 10 million, 900 killed is equivalent to a mass casualty event of 30,000 Americans. In response, the Israeli government quickly declared a state of war, calling up over 300,000 reservists and laying the groundwork for a final battle to destroy the terrorist group that has long vowed to drive the Jews into the sea. Now, as an American fleet moves in and more evidence suggests the attacks were supported by Russian ally Iran, things could get dicey quickly.

Hamas didn't simply attack Israeli military units or take out strategic targets. They mutilated the bodies of Jewish soldiers, killed entire families, kidnapped children and the elderly, and sexually assaulted women and girls before either killing them or carting them back to Gaza as trophies. One of the kidnapped is a survivor of the Nazi attempt to exterminate the Jews.

The site of the largest slaughter was a music festival, where some 5,000 people gathered for what was billed as "a journey of unity and love." Nearly 300 were killed, and women were raped next to the bodies of their friends. Hamas didn't just commit atrocities: they filmed and broadcast them.

Hannah Arendt, the brilliant Jewish philosopher of the twentieth century, introduced what she called the “banality of evil,” that moral horrors like the Holocaust aren’t caused by monsters but by ordinary people. What the world witnessed Saturday might be called the “reality of evil.” What’s been exposed since is the broken ability of our world to think in moral categories about even the most horrendous of evils.

A peril of prosperity is the illusion that peace and affluence are normal and natural parts of life, rather than a blessed anomaly of history. Not only is our economic situation a relatively new phenomenon, but as Tom Holland and Glen Scrivener have compellingly argued, our expectations of human rights and dignity are recent and owed to Christianity’s influence on the world. In other words, what shocked the world on October 7 would’ve been an ordinary experience for many humans throughout history.

And yet, evil remains an ordinary experience of humanity after Eden. Calling it healthcare or medical-aid-in-dying or population control or sexual freedom doesn’t make killing, exploitation, or abuse any less evil—only more sterilized.

Other reactions to the attack on Israel have revealed that it is possible to become morally upside down, calling evil good and vice-versa. As expected, radical Islamic regimes around the world celebrated. Radicalized Muslim and leftist groups, conveniently safe in the tolerant West they despise, justified or even praised what happened. Many Western political leaders were clear in their condemnation of Hamas, but others obfuscated. Former British Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn refused to condemn Hamas, while Michigan Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib used the attacks to call for the U.S. to cut aid to Israel. If you wonder what kids are learning in university, 31 Harvard student groups jointly affirmed their support, not of Israel, but of Hamas.

Thankfully, louder voices are expressing shock, sorrow, and solidarity on behalf of Israel. In a move that may have had Hitler rolling over in his grave, Berlin’s famous Brandenburg Gate was illuminated with the Star of David. Some Arab countries newly at peace with Israel expressed sympathy, and in a remarkable display, some Iranian soccer fans apparently shouted down an attempt to celebrate Hamas.

In moments like these, postmodern ideals that imply no truth is true and moral claims are only naked grabs of power are exposed. Disney may be committed to the idea that every villain has a justifying backstory, and that there’s no black and white, only gray. But this vision fails the test of the real world. The *only* explanation for anyone who excuses, justifies, or celebrates Hamas’ actions on October 7 is that they have been taken captive, either by Islamic extremism or by the Critical Theory mood, in which the oppressed and oppressors have already been decided.

Two more aspects of evil, taught within a Christian worldview, are evident here as well. First, not all evils are equal. As someone rightly claimed, saying that “both sides are wrong” is like saying “Mordor is evil, but Frodo has his flaws.” Second, evil should not be tolerated. Harboring Hamas will likely be the most destructive decision made by the Palestinian authorities.

The butchers of Hamas aren’t misunderstood, nor did they misunderstand what they were doing. Our contemporary worldviews are wholly inadequate when it comes to recognizing, understanding, and responding to evil. Christians should work and pray for God to bring a right understanding back to the world, even as we pray for Him to bring a just peace to the people of Israel.

This *Breakpoint* was co-authored by Dr. Timothy Padgett. For more resources to live like a Christian in this cultural moment, go to breakpoint.org.

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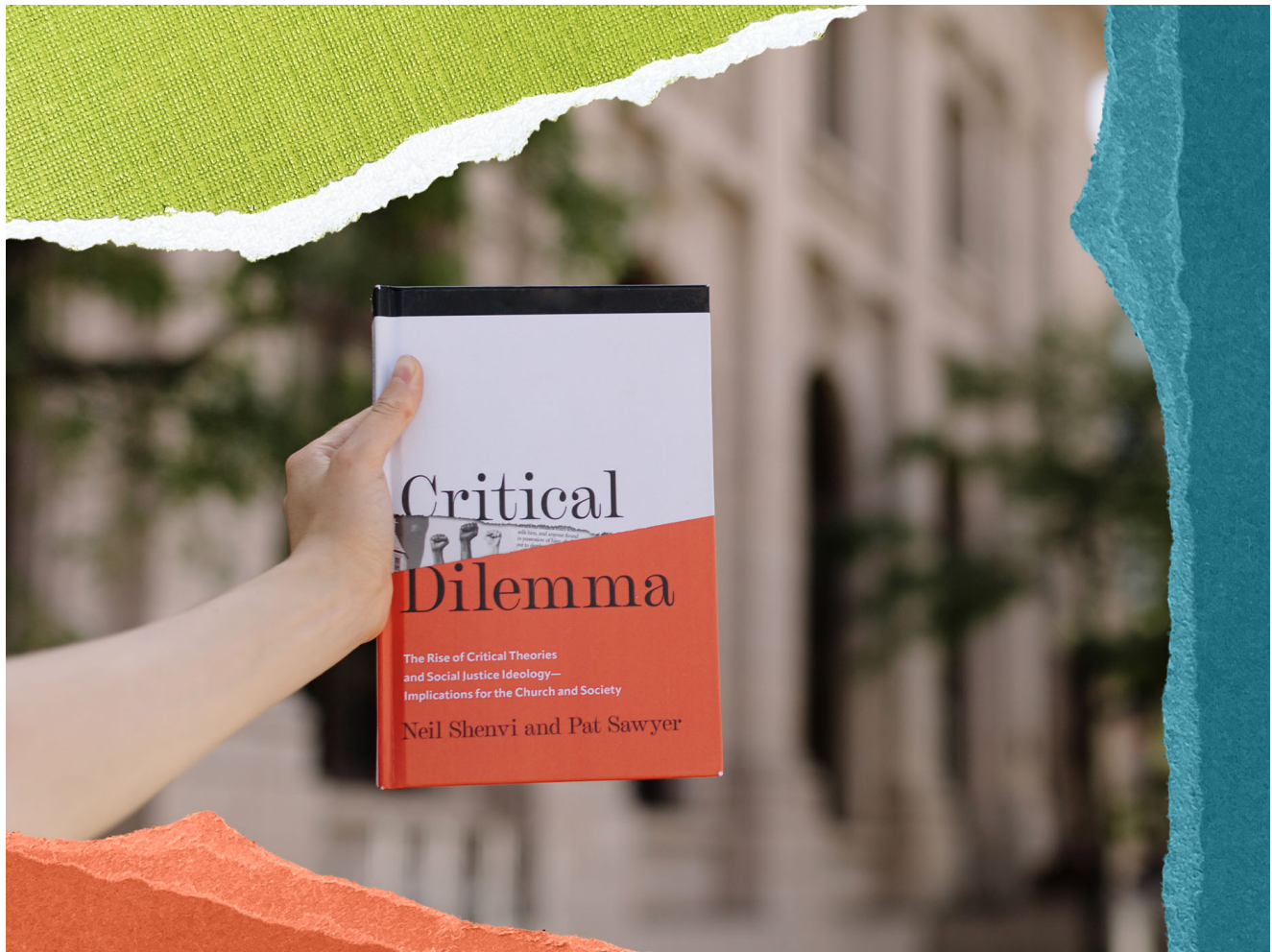


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