

# **DID GOD WHACK NEW ORLEANS? A THEOLOGICAL INQUIRY**

**By Don Feder**

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Was Katrina a warning – the ultimate wake-up call for a morally somnolent nation? Even religious conservatives are afraid to speculate, so successfully have we been cowed by a culture of disbelief.

Regarding the way God works in the world, there are four possibilities:

1. There is no God and everything that happens is the result of the random collision of molecules.
2. There is a God, but he's an absentee landlord. He arranged the world, including nature, as a self-regulating mechanism, then sat back and allowed it to function on its own.
3. There is a God and he controls everything, down to the minutest detail. If a certain leaf falls from a particular tree, it's because he wants that leaf to fall from that tree. (Regarding the actions of humans, this would seem to negate the concept of free will.)
4. There is a God who usually allows nature, or individuals, to follow their own course or path. But sometimes he intervenes to create a specific outcome, or to fire a warning shot across the bow of an errant people. When this happens, we call the result a miracle (thereby recognizing that it is supernatural) – as when He parted the Red Sea for the Children of Israel, or when the American Revolution succeeded, against impossible odds.

Of these theories, the fourth seems the most plausible. And so, it is not unreasonable to inquire: With the devastation wrought on New Orleans (and surrounding areas) was God trying to tell us something?

For all of our virtues, modern Americans are almost childlike in their innocence. Recall that after 9/11, “God Bless America” was on everyone’s lips. (Stickers with the slogan sprouted on bumpers like wildflowers on the prairie after a spring rain.)

But why exactly should God bless Americans? Are we so special that we’re automatically entitled to His manifold blessings – regardless of our conduct?

If God can bless, can He also withhold His blessings – remove His protection from an obstinate, arrogant people? “I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse. Therefore, choose life, so that thou mayest live – thou and thy seed” (Deuteronomy 30: 19-20).

Miracles aside, God created humanity in such a way that we punish ourselves when we behave badly – witness the anarchy that wracked New Orleans in the aftermath of Katrina: the murders, the rapes, that assaults, the arson, the elderly nursing home residents left to die as their alleged caregivers fled. All are the product of society’s exaltation of the individual and of the creation of a culture of entitlement. We asked for it; we got it.

God to Abraham: “I will bless those who bless you, and curse those who curse you” (Genesis 12: 1-3). No, this is not just about Israel. But, consider this: Has there ever been a nation more blessed than America? Has there ever been a nation better to the Jewish people?

For secularists, the following is coincidence. For the faithful, well, as Richard Dreyfuss says in “Close Encounters of The Third Kind” -- “I think this means something.”

- Katrina hit New Orleans one week to the day after the Sharon government carried out the forced removal of some 9,500 Jewish residents of Gaza and parts of Samaria. This was done under pressure from Washington. (“I will curse those who curse you.”) On the day Katrina made landfall, bodies were being removed from Jewish cemeteries in Gaza, to prevent Palestinians from desecrating the remains. Israeli bodies were disinterred; American bodies floated in the streets of New Orleans.
- 9,500 Jews were driven from Gaza. Most are still homeless. Roughly half-a-million Americans were displaced by Katrina. Based on America’s population ratio with Israel (about 50-to-1) this is roughly equivalent.
- Numerology is important in traditional Judaism. Each Hebrew letter is assigned a number value. Many scholars believe the Bible has hidden codes that can be unlocked by this device. Written in Hebrew, Katrina has a numerical equivalent of 374. There are two relevant passages that share this number -- “They did unto thee evil” (Genesis, 50:17) and “The sea upon land” (Exodus 14:15).
- “Katrina” comes from the Greek meaning “to purify.” New Orleans City Council President Oliver Thomas observed, “Maybe God is going to cleanse us.”
- Katrina hit New Orleans days before the scheduled Southern Decadence – an annual orgy celebrating alternative death-styles, characterized by nudity and public copulation. New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin, welcomed the freak-fest with the following proclamation: “There is no place like this on Earth! Southern Decadence XXXII is an

exciting event. We welcome you and know that you can anticipate great food, great music and great times in New Orleans.” Not to mention great sodomy.

- Katrina came close to the fourth anniversary of another national disaster. On September 11, 2001, 3,000 Americans perished, not from flood but fire.
- If you’re looking for passage from the Bible that seems to forecast 9/11 -- 3,300 year before planes hit the World Trade Center -- try Deuteronomy, 28:49. Here, God tells the Israelites what will befall them if they abandon His ways. “The Lord will bring a nation against thee from far, as the vulture swoopeth down (*like a bird of prey descending on its target*) ... a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand (*how many Americans know Arabic?*): a nation of fierce countenance, that shalt not regard the person of the old, nor show favor to the young ( *jihad makes no age or gender distinctions, nor does it distinguish between soldiers and non-combatants*) .... And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fortified walls (*The World Trade Center? The Pentagon?*), come down, wherein thou didst trust.” Would you like God to buy time on a telecast of Monday night football to transmit His message?

But most who perished or lost their homes in Katrina, as well as 9/11 victims, were decent. Does God allow the innocent to suffer, along with the guilty? In the Bible, when Israel sinned, it was punished collectively -- not just those who offered up their children to Baal, but children as well.

Responsibility for the actions of the community is a theme of Yom Kippur. On the Day of Atonement, worshippers publicly confess to a litany of sins – most of which they didn’t personally commit. This is to acknowledge that we bear a degree of responsibility for the sins of others. Did we do enough to keep

them from straying? Did we allow a culture where the weak were ensnared? Did we remain silent in the face of gross iniquity? What sort of leaders did we choose?

Earlier generations of Americans understood this. When war and other calamities befell the nation, there was serious soul-searching. Our leaders declared national days of prayer and fasting.

In his Second Inaugural Address, Lincoln allowed that the Civil War (easily the bloodiest in our history) was America's punishment for the sin of slavery. Our 16<sup>th</sup> president declared: "Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until ... every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid with another drawn with the sword, as was said 3,000 years ago, so still it must be said 'the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'"

Didn't the Great Emancipator know that innocents perished in that terrible conflict? (Among the casualties, the number who actually owned slaves was miniscule.) Lincoln – who wasn't religious until later in life – acknowledged that when God punishes a nation, the guiltless suffer along with the guilty.

But, fear not, O' smug secularists, Katrina's warning will no more be heeded than 9/11. Last week, a gaggle of perverts paraded in New Orleans. Hundreds dead and half-a-million homeless weren't going to stop them from strutting their stuff.

While waters still swirled in the Big Easy, the California Legislature became the first in the nation to approve homosexual marriage – disregarding voters' express wishes. (In a 2000 referendum, 61% of California voters approved an initiative declaring, "Only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or

recognized in California.”) So powerful is the sodomy lobby that a majority of legislators had no qualms about defying the people.

Just days ago, the Palestinian Nazis torched Gaza synagogues – in sort of an Arabian Kristallnacht. And they’ll still be rewarded with millions of dollars in American aid.

And, last week, a U.S. district court in Sacramento ruled it’s unconstitutional for school children to recite the Pledge of Allegiance with the words “One nation under God.” In Scriptures, God tell us – time and again – “If you turn your back on me, I will turn my back on you.”

If Katrina was a national wake-up call, the phone just keeps on ringing – off the wall. It’s still sleepy-time down South -- and up North. As for those of you who get it, keep crying in the wilderness. It’s all we can do.

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