

Guest Editorial

Loss of the Emperor

AS AN INVETERATE ARMCHAIR PHILOSOPHER steeped in medical acupuncture, I often muse about world events from an energy perspective. Chinese Medicine is capable of extraordinary insights into the human condition. For example, it can be enlightening to apply Five Elements constitution typing to national identities, as if a country's characteristics might be understood as energetic tints. This amusing game often leads to lively discussion at our residential program in Canada. While I would hesitate to take the exercise too seriously, as a Canadian, it is probably acceptable for me to suggest that Canada's love affair with a chronically malfunctioning Medicare system reflects a strong Earth component to the national identity.

But why stop at national constitutional typing? We can look at other big issues. For example, events in the Middle East are perfect fodder for an energetic analysis. There is a seemingly irresolvable painful situation that has been going on for eons; and much like a chronic pain patient who tries to eradicate his symptoms with analgesics and various other medications, each side in that struggle attempts to eradicate what they see as the source of their pain – the other side – using an increasingly dangerous array of modern technologically sophisticated weaponry. Thus, where individuals in pain bombard themselves with a chemical armamentarium, nations in pain do the same with a military armamentarium.

From the safety of my armchair, I sometimes wonder what the hostilities are all about. After all, the geographical areas are small and indeed, the whole of Israel-Palestine could probably be contained within a single North American state. Why not, as one much vilified prime minister suggested, give one of the warring parties an equivalent piece of land somewhere else? As an alternative to the endless wars, it does seem a reasonable proposition, no matter how psychotic the proposer.

But what would Chinese Medicine say? To further elucidate this, I researched the Web and sought out a Lebanese client who educated me about the region's history, of which my understanding was woefully inadequate. Apparently, the old city of Jerusalem contains many sites sacred to the three Abrahamic religions. To the Jewish people, it is *Ir Ha-*

Kodesh (the Holy City), the Biblical Zion, the City of David, the site of Solomon's Temple, and the eternal capital of the Israelite nation. To Christians, it is where the young Jesus impressed the sages at the Jewish temple, where he spent the last days of his ministry, and where the Last Supper, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection took place. Also greatly venerated by the Muslims, the belief is that it is where the prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven.¹

The Muslim quarter is the largest and is the place where the last Temple of Solomon reputedly stood. King Solomon, the son of (Hebrew) King David, who captured Urusalem (later renamed Jerusalem) in 1000 BC from the Egyptian Canaanites, built the Temple that came to be regarded as the holiest of Hebrew shrines. After the Temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar II in 586 BC, a second temple was completed in 515 BC at the same site. Nearby is the *Wailing Wall*, built by the Roman Emperor Herod the Great (374 BC), where, for centuries, Jews have gathered on the eve of the Sabbath to pray and lament the destruction of the original Temple.

Between 687 and 691, again in the Temple area, a mosque was built, known as the *Dome of the Rock*, because it was constructed over a rock from which the Prophet Muhammad was believed to have made a night journey to heaven. Known in Arabic as *Qubbat As-Sakhr*, it is not a mosque for public worship but rather, a *mashhad*, or a shrine for pilgrims. The Al-Aqsa Mosque, built in the early eighth century, is adjacent to the Dome and is where Muslims pray.

Finally, in the Christian quarter, West of the Muslim quarter, is the church of the Holy Sepulchre. Rebuilt many times, it stands on the site of a church built in 335 AD by order of Constantine I, the first Christian emperor, to mark the area where Jesus was crucified and buried. To the east of that church is *Via Dolorosa*, the route that Jesus took on the way to His crucifixion. Outside of the old city, beyond the eastern wall, lies the Garden of Gethsemane, the traditional site of the betrayal of Jesus by Judas. It is situated at the foot of the *Mount of Olives*, regarded as the place where Jesus ascended to heaven 40 days after the resurrection from the grave.

As brief as this summary is, it clearly demonstrates that

*Editor's Note: We welcome submissions of Guest Editorials for the Journal.

the geographic Jerusalem is actually a potent symbol for something that transcends the warring parties, a spirit of divinity so to speak, that is somewhat stifled by the continuous hostilities. In that respect, the situation perfectly mirrors the quandary of the chronic pain patient, whose conflicting egoic interests have wrested control of the Heart-center from the Emperor.² In a very real sense, Jerusalem is the Heart-center of the Middle East, and the warring parties are vying for ownership of Heart Yin, which actually belongs to everyone and no one. Chinese Medicine would therefore say: *Heart and Mind are separated, the Emperor is besieged, and Heart Spirit is deficient.*

Chinese Medicine regards the loss of the Emperor as the end result of a long-standing separation of Yin and Yang and can be a harbinger of serious disease to come, such as heart disease or cancer.³ Etiologically, it often begins with a sense of betrayal that erodes the trust between Heart and Mind. Jarrett states:

“ . . . mind, no longer able to trust the Heart’s innate wisdom, seizes control of the will (zhi) and begins to dictate policy based upon the faculty of reason and the analysis of data.” He goes on to state “unity between Heart and mind must be restored if therapy is to be effective and healing complete.”³

On a personal level, betrayal can simply be the loss of safety arising from the violence of a car collision or other injury, or it may be more generalized and involve repeated traumas that date back to childhood and/or beyond. In Israel and Palestine, the sense of betrayal is both monumental and ancient, affects all parties, and goes back for 2,000-3,000 years. In both cases, Chinese Medicine teaches that healing must involve a conscious reintegration of Heart and Mind.

I shift my seat in the armchair to contemplate our clinic experience, which has demonstrated time and again that the way out of the trap of “us against them,” or “patient vs symptoms,” or for that matter, any pathological dualistic antagonism, is to abandon the antagonistic approach altogether and surrender to the experience of the symptoms themselves. Such a counterintuitive move returns the imbalance to the Tao, the one place where harmony and integration can be found, where all conflicting interests can merge in their original oneness, and where, like a phoenix, the Heart-center can resurrect itself out of the ashes of its prior destruction.

If such an approach can work for the individual, surely it might also work for a group consciousness. Of course, where nations are concerned, the theatre of operations is much larger, and the lingering pain far more pervasive, but the basic energetic situation is both similar and beautifully

elucidated by Chinese Medicine. That being the case, an effective healing process would need to involve some kind of experiential acknowledgement of the sense of betrayal, evidently common to all parties, that lies at the root of their mutual pain and bitterness; a Mideast equivalent, perhaps, of the South African truth and reconciliation process commissioned to bring closure to Apartheid.

To be fair, non-acupuncturists have thought of this too. For example, the Sulha Peace Project⁴ and the Abrahamic Reunion group (ARG)⁵ have espoused exactly such a solution, although they appear to have suffered a setback with the most recent war.⁶ The word “Sulha” describes an ancient Arab practice for reconciliation between feuding tribes, and the ARG is an interfaith team dedicated to building peace in the Holy Land by opening the heart to the wisdom of all spiritual traditions. Although such groups have yet to make the one big impression that might lead to a breakthrough, at least they exist, and my mind says, their presence is reason for hope. Of course, from a rational standpoint, the whole idea may seem totally impractical. But perhaps as the antagonism gradually deepens, there may come a tipping point when all parties become willing to give the non-rational some serious consideration.

But then, I’m probably sinking too far into my idealistic armchair, and furthermore, I’ve never been to Jerusalem.

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*Michael T. Greenwood, MB (MD), BCHIR
FCFP, CAFCI, FAAMA, FRSA
Victoria Pain Clinic
103-284 Helmcken Road
Victoria, BC V9B 1T2
Canada*

E-mail: michaelgreenwood@shaw.ca