

Suicide Bombers and Salvation

BY RABBI DAVID WOLPE

The documentary *Precious Life* tells of Israeli Doctor Roz Somech's saving the life of an infant whose mother then insists she would be proud if the boy grew up to be a suicide bomber. It put me in mind of what the English historian Thomas Macaulay called the finest sentence ever written.

It is found in Julius Caesar's (Latin) answer to Cicero. Cicero wrote to express thanks for the compassion the conqueror displayed toward political adversaries who fell into his power at the surrender of Corfinium. The sentence Macaulay so admired reads:

I triumph and rejoice that my action should have obtained your approval; nor am I disturbed when I hear it said that those whom I have sent off alive and free will again bear arms against me; for there is nothing which I so much covet as that I should be like myself, and they like themselves.

Certainly we pray and hope and work toward changing the nature of those who wish us ill. But our tradition insists that they must not change our essential nature: The Talmud describes Jews as "merciful people and the children of merciful people." Sometimes nobility consists in refusing to be debased by the depravity of others.