

Editorial: The Feast of Barhusobam

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It was the greatest nation on Earth.

Freedom brought great prosperity to its citizens, while citizens in other countries languished and suffered under oppressive regimes. Freedom brought forth great advances in medicine, and the House of Medicine in the great nation became the envy of the world. Foreign rulers and citizens alike traveled to the great nation for treatment.

However, those who were members of the House of Medicine in the great nation had become complacent, apathetic, and weak, unable to defend against attacks on their freedom. Members of the House of Medicine drank heavily from the golden cup of assignment, and lost their senses.

They paid homage to RVUs, DRGs, P4P, CER, HIT, and EMRs. Those whom they purported to serve were subjected to rationing and loss of privacy, and became nearly invisible, as “providers” played with their new wireless EMR tablets. RVU production became the highest priority, while patients became merely a means to an end: more RVU production.

Meanwhile, the government in the great nation had been gradually taken over by the party of HiTaxes, and had been slowly encroaching on ever-increasing portions of what was left of freedom in the House of Medicine. The regime of HiTaxes brought forth HMOs, which inflicted rationing on the people of the country, so that the elected lords and their minions in the bureaucracy would not be seen as personally rationing medical care. The HMOs were paid handsomely for undertaking this unsavory task and shielding the regime from the wrath of mistreated citizens. The most powerful lords of HiTaxes were also fond of singing the only song they knew: “Oh Say Can You See, Universal Coverage For All Except Me,” even though the siren song of “universal coverage” was known to have lured many a ship to the rocks on the shores of socialist countries.

Under the socialist tutelage of public education, citizens of the great nation came to believe that those who lived in the far-off land of Miinob enjoyed a much better life. And it came to pass that the citizens of the great nation gave up their treasured freedom and elected a king—King Barhusobam. Citizens of the great nation pressured their king to fulfill what the Miinobs had told them was their long-denied “right” to medical care. The utopia, of everyone living at the expense of everyone else, and receiving “free” medical care, was simply too difficult to resist.

Sensing the restlessness of his subjects and opportunity to enhance his own power and status, King Barhusobam of the great nation held a great feast in honor of his own greatness. He invited the most important and influential enchanters and prestigious purveyors of Miinob propaganda to his feast in the Great Hall of Change in his grand palace on the hill. There was great revelry and celebration of the impending demise of freedom in the House of Medicine. At last, someone as smart as Barhusobam and his court would be in charge of making the decisions about medical care that his intellectually deficient subjects were incapable of making for themselves.

In the midst of the great feast, the following words suddenly appeared on the large plasma screen in the Great Hall of Change:

Mene-Med, HiTekel, and Miinob. Translation was provided by Dan, the exiled computer guru. Mene-Med: The days of medicine under the King are numbered. HiTekel: The practice of medicine envisioned by the King has been weighed on the scales of the sacrosanct patient-doctor relationship and found wanting. Miinob: Unless citizens repent, the House of Medicine will be given to those who live in the land of Miinob (*malum indutus in nomen bonus*, “evil clothed in the name of good”).

Despite overwhelming evidence that prosperity and progress are directly linked to the degree of freedom in a society, the cycle of tyranny and oppression leading to poverty and suffering, leading to rebellion and freedom, leading to complacency and apathy, leading once again to tyranny and oppression, has repeated itself throughout the course of history. Wisdom and lessons learned about what does not work, traditionally passed on from one generation to the next, have been lost, as each generation in its arrogance has considered itself smarter and wiser than the one before it.

Opportunists have employed the same tactics over and over again, with great success. The scheme of stoking the fires of class envy, confiscating the earned wealth of the hated group and redistributing to others, and declaring “rights” to be paid for by others plays well among the masses, who firmly believe that something for nothing and equal wealth are not only possible under force of government, but represent “social justice.” Meanwhile, discord builds among those subjected to legalized plunder by government. At some point, the plundered either organize and retaliate, or simply stop producing. Why work hard, when government will only confiscate the fruits of your labor and redistribute it to those who do not work, or who work less hard? When the incentive to work is destroyed, the economy collapses.

The House of Medicine is under attack again by those who claim good intentions, but whose ill-conceived actions will reliably lead to harmful outcomes for patients. The patient-doctor relationship is the most valuable treasure of the House of Medicine. The freedom to practice medicine and make decisions based on best clinical judgment, as opposed to the rationing and cost-containment initiatives of government bureaucrats, must be protected and preserved.

Theft, whether by legalized plunder by government or by promises of “universal coverage” financed by fraudulent Ponzi schemes, is morally wrong. Equating “universal coverage” with universal access is also a complete fraud. Universal coverage does not guarantee timely universal access to medical care. And, so-called public-private partnerships with play-or-pay punishments administered through the tax code ultimately lead to the same adverse outcomes for patients.

The Feast of Barhusobam is underway, and the writing is on the plasma screen. Whether or not the people of this great nation heed the warning or continue to pursue fraudulent and destructive socialism remains to be seen. The fate of the House of Medicine and the best medical care available in the world hangs in the balance.

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