Are Obama's dreams coming true?

Last Thursday morning as I lay in bed looking at the rain coming steadily down on the windowpane, I thought of Mitt. He's narrowing the gap. Good for him. In Iowa, a full 75 percent of the Republican voters chose someone else, but in New Hampshire, it was only 63 percent. By any measure ("A victory is a victory," he said after winning Iowa by eight votes), this is progress. Whether its juggernaut progress remains to be seen. South Carolina looms though observant Jews are excluded. Its primary is being held on Jan. 21, Shabbat. But there's hope for Jewish participation. The obnoxiously wealthy among us can still try to buy their favorites a few delegates.

Sheldon Adelson, one of the "multi-zillionaires," has pledged $5 million to help Newt Gingrich's Super PAC (political action committee) run anti-Romney ads that would make a socialist proud. For nearly 30 minutes, viewers see how Romney's Bain Capital would buy up ailing companies, strip them of any latent and residual value and then, through a process of reverse financial peristalsis, throw the workers onto the street. It's capitalism at its worst, Republicans (REPUBLICANS, for crying out loud!) charge. "You have to ask the question, is capitalism really about the ability of a handful of rich people to manipulate the lives of thousands of people and then walk off with the money?" Gingrich asked, ignoring the fact that Adelson is bankrolling him.

Griffin Perry, son of Texas Governor Rick Perry, got snide: "Mitt Romney knows how to lead... lead people straight out the door with a pink slip."

Père Perry was not shy about entering the verbal jousting contest either. "I am as much of a capitalist and have a record to prove it… by helping create over a million jobs in the state of Texas," he said in an interview on Fox. "But there's a real difference between venture capitalism and vulture capitalism, and that's what we're talking about here."

Matt Brooks, director of the Republican Jewish Coalition, isn't bothered by the attacks. "At some point, it's fairly obvious that the Obama campaign would have raised this issue anyway," Brooks said. "I'm not sure they're happy that it's been taken away from them and is not on their terms."

Matt, you disingenuous spin doctor, of course Democrats are happy, though thrilled might be a better word. It's usually the job of the vice presidential candidate to smear the opposition. Now Joe Biden, the presumptive candidate, will only have to quote Republicans, which will give that much more credibility to the anti-Romney barrage. These attacks against Mitt will end only when Romney is finally nominated in August, but as Saul Ricklin, a local contributor to The New York Times' opinion pages, wrote, "I can hardly wait for the coming hilarity of hearing all the Republican candidates now denigrating Mitt Romney start to laud him as what this country needs as a president if and when he wins the nomination."

Me, too, Saul, me, too.

Of course, Romney has his own Jewish money baggers including Mel Sembler, the Florida shopping center magnate, and Fred Zeidman, a Texas lawyer. And so the money flows. At least these guys aren't also trying to determine Israeli politics the way Adelson does. He's a major backer of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and pours money into his coffers as well. Well, I suppose that if I'd made my millions by luring people to Las Vegas so they could lose their money in glitzy, gilded gaucheness, I'd want to make sure my ideas, obviously sanctified by a Higher Power as I'm so successful, become the laws of the land.

You'll note, of course that this Republican brouhaha is about capitalism – for Romney, of the unbridled kind, and for Gingrich and Perry who would rein it in. But let's take a look at the founder of capitalism, Adam Smith (1723-1790). His most famous book is "The Wealth of Nations," which advocates an unregulated, market-driven economy. But Smith wasn't talking about Bain Capital getting wealthy bur rather the nation. He was as much a moralist as he was an economist. He believed that labor is what gives things value. A cottonseed is worth nothing, but apply labor and eventually you get a shirt. A Jewish economist of the same era, David Ricardo (1772-1823), took this point and extended it. Only labor gives things value. Are Republicans finally giving credence to this perspective that has been with us since the dawn of capitalism? Probably not: Mitt's got the Republication nomination sewn up, so the Bain Capital model will likely be the United States' prototype if there is a Republican victory in November. Ah well, people like labor-saving devices. But maybe they don't like labor-destroying financial devices as much. We'll see.

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