

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED TWENTY

by Rabbi Yitzchok Rubin

"Europe Condemns anti-Semitism ..." so reads a headline from a newspaper. The article which follows tells of a conference held in Berlin recently. The participants represented every European country together with the United States and Canada. The sole topic of these meetings was the "rising tide of anti-Semitism." Much of the debate had centered on what participants called "an insidious new form of anti-Semitism" in which criticism of Israel's policies becomes a cover for demonizing Jews, denying the Jewish state its right to exist and comparing Israel to Nazi Germany." All the participants felt that education and greater efforts to prosecute racist crimes was needed to stop this dangerous situation from growing even worse. I would like to add a word or two aimed at finding the root cause of all this hate.

This is not anything new, yet we find ourselves surprised each time it happens. The world does not like us; there, I've said it!

Now we can talk about it openly. The world finds it hard to allow Yidden to live in peace; they turn their collective backs on us at almost every sign of a problem. Look around you today; it does not take a great chacham to figure out that anti-Semitism is now more open, and more vehement. The conference held in that place that gave birth to "the final solution" is long past due.

There was a lot of press coverage about a certain English publication that depicted on its cover a Jewish Star with words that said in essence, "The Jews are running the country." This was bad enough, however, if anyone took the time to read the article within, they would have seen something much worse. The author of the cover story went to great lengths to prove that in fact the Jews do not run the country and that therefore the rest of the nation need not fear the Jews at all. What remained unsaid, but quite clear, was that one could go out and feel free to disparage the Jews without any trepidation because they were not all that powerful after all. This is symptomatic of an age-old problem. Jews are in galus and it is a galus built on senseless hatred of us.

In merry old England one of the year's cultural highpoints is the annual "Reith Lectures" which can be heard on the radio over several weeks. The lectures are named after the founding father of the British Broadcasting establishment, Lord Reith, and are meant to be very high toned. Each year a unique star from the firmament of philosophers and thinkers is chosen to give these lectures and it is considered a very special honor indeed to be asked. This year's series is being given by a Noble prize winner who is not only a philosopher but a Black poet as well. I mention this only to indicate his minority status. In his lengthy remarks he has made it a point time and again to rail against the Jews,

and shower his humane pity on the poor down trodden Palestinians. The facts do not seem to blur his vision - the Jews are ruthless, be well and full stop. This poison drips into the ears of millions of people throughout the world, and is being paid for by the taxpayers of Britain.

This is just the tip of the iceberg; we as Yidden know all this and feel the tightness in our chests whenever some new insult is thrown our way. Truth no longer seems part of the equation, nor is fairness. Those who kill and maim are the heroes and those who seek a small little space - the aggressor. Who ever thought it would be considered brave for a mother to strap bombs on her young so that they could kill innocent people? The world is mad, and as always, we are taking the brunt.

How has it come to this? Why barely sixty years after the Holocaust is it again okay to talk about Jews in such a fashion?

The answers to all such questions could fill volumes and take years of conferences, something we do not have time for. However one point should be made. When it first became permissible to talk evil about us, even in just a whisper, at that very moment the poison was born once more. The problems we face are because the evil slander spoken about Klal Yisrael is allowed to go on being spoken without rigorous objection. Things were said and no one stood up and said "No, that's a lie!"

Lashon hara feeds on lashon hara and once the nations heard the evil slander they felt free to speak it in their own tongue. Soon it could be said aloud, for in fact the perceptions our enemies created of us now have become the facts as they want to see them.

Therefore murderers are to be pitied and the slandered victims to be vilified. Holding conferences of the great and the good won't stop the rot; rather, a great deal of soul searching is in order for every nation.

Unfortunately, we as a people are often complacent, and become party to this lashon hara. Those who have severed their bonds with Hashem and His Torah are all too quick to speak out against us. They would rather be "liberal" and "politically correct" than be found defending what we as Jews have stood for over generations. This sort of lashon hara is depleting and can be just as, if not more than, dangerous to our people. So what to do?

How about a bit of prayer?

David knew all about such moments in our nation's history and he teaches us how to turn to Hashem at such times.

Shir Hama'alos ... Batzarasa Li ... "A Song of Ascents. In my distress I cried to Hashem, and He answered me."

Firstly, we must rise above the rubble of what this world delivers to us. We are meant to work through life's difficulties and find the strength to achieve a higher level of reality. From such a

spiritual height we ask Hashem to hear our plea. Our distress is real, but we rise above all thoughts of material need and accept that Hashem's answer will be received at the spiritual level.

Hashem, Hatzila Nafshi ... "Hashem, rescue my soul from lying lips, from a deceitful tongue."

The world speaks its lies about us; they whip up hate and create despair. The tongue and lips move as one against us.

Chitzei Gibor Shenunim ... "The arrows of the mighty are sharpened with coals of rotem wood."

Rashi explains that the coals of other wood become extinguished from without and within at about the same rate, whereas coals of this sort of wood seem to be cooled from outside but in the core they are still afire. We sometimes think that our enemies have cooled down, that their anger had dissipated with time. No, within the core they still burn with that ancient antagonism, just waiting to ignite once again into flames of hate.

Rabas Shachna La Nafshi ... "Long has my soul dwelt with those who hate peace." The Jewish nation has had to live with this hate for generations.

Ani Shalom ... "I am peace - but when I speak, they are for war."

It is demoralizing; we speak of peace only to hear war in reply! How often our words are twisted. How many times do we try to live in harmony only to find the world changing the markers, leaving us with no resort other than self defence? Yes, Yidden pray, we turn to Hashem with these impossible problems, knowing full well that there will never be any true peace until the tongues are quieted by the power of Hashem's love for His children.

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