

# CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED THIRTY

by Rabbi Yitzchok Rubin

I was spat on today. Nothing serious, I know, but obviously disturbing. We are living in a "free society" and shouldn't be frightened to go about our lawful business, but I was spat upon all the same. Two kids rode past me on bikes and did their bit for race relations. They cursed my Jewishness, and then, well, they spat.

Yes, it's come to this and obviously worse. We are surrounded by hostility and are the victims of misinformation and just lazy reporting. It starts with spitting, but if allowed to go on, it will lead to greater transgressions, much greater.

I spoke some months ago to a large group of *heimishe* Torah supporters at a function for a Torah institution. It was just when the first signs of the spreading of anti-Semitism were beginning to crop up. In my *drasha* I pointed out what many news commentators agreed was happening all around us, and said what I felt was the obvious - that the only real solution would come from our whole-hearted reaching out to Hashem.

Afterward, a communal leader got up to accept an award and turned around to berate those who spoke of any reawakening of anti-Jewish feeling. Obviously the fellow meant yours truly, only he had enough *derech erez* not to say so.

Well, I hate to say I told you so, but I told you so. For one who was born just moments after the last World War, I could never fathom how it was possible for so-called civilized nations to turn into such ferocious beasts. I can now understand. We are witnessing the same tenseness around us. Things are said that were never heard before, and the huge silent majority are doing what they have always done - sitting on the fence.

Someone once remarked that anti-Semitism is a light sleeper and at the slightest noise it rears its angry head. Well, now our brethren in Eretz Yisrael are being blown apart by sneaking madmen who walk amongst the innocent. In America the administration openly admits that the "home of the free and the brave" will be attacked, but that they have no idea how to stop it, while in England and in other parts of Europe, meetings are being held by Jewish security people who are desperate to keep its citizenry safe. All this is being played as background music to a wave of anti-Semitism not seen for generations. Somehow the "bad guys" have become those who have suffered the most from society's enemies, and popular reasoning has it that if only we Jews would live and let live, everything in the world would be okay.

All this could be deemed as just an external situation. The phenomenon of those from without turning against us is something that is definitely not new. However, this leads directly to a worse conflict - the inner one, and that is the most dangerous of them all. We begin to question ourselves. We have doubts, are confused, dazed, and can't think straight. This is the nastiest situation, for then we are in jeopardy of losing our G-dly connection. We begin to wonder if Hashem will hear our pleas, if our self-doubts haven't driven us away from Hashem's shelter. Perhaps our sins have put us beyond the pale? If this is so, then we surely deserve to be doomed.

*Chas veshalom!* Hashem is always with us! But this is the inner turmoil that can cause us to lose our grip, when the rope that binds us starts to slide through our spiritual hands. The main thing in any battle is to know what is real and what is just a facade. We must always remember that Hashem is the only true reality, and He has promised us His eternal love. Read this moving psalm and let its sweetness give heart.

*Shir hamaalos mimaamakim kirasicha Hashem...*, "A song of ascents. Out of the depths I have called to You, Hashem." A *gutte Yid* once explained that the word "depths" indicates various levels of despair we may fall into. Each of us can find ourselves in the depths of despair, yet we must believe that no matter how low we have sunk, Hashem will hear us. The Sfas Emes tells us that "each person will realize the truth according to the level of his faith. Even the most righteous tzaddik in the world will have some point of doubt where he must have faith; even he will not reach the truth unless he has faith." We are all prone to fall at some time, but if we have faith, and from those depths we call out, then Hashem will be there.

*Hashem, shima bekoli...*, "My Master, hear my voice; let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications." We ask Hashem to hear the manner of our voice; to sense how stricken we are, how afraid.

*Im avonos tishmor Kah...*, "If G-d should take account of iniquities, my Master, who could survive?" We are but human, and thus plagued by human faults. We survive; we are here to pray, only because Hashem understands us more than we do.

*Ki imecha haselicha lemaan tivarei...*, "For with You is forgiveness, in order that You be feared." Hashem forgives us so that we can come even closer and realize His enormity and care.

*Kivisi Hashem kivesa nafshi...*, "I hope for Hashem, my soul hopes; and for His word, I wait." Even in my depths I understand that true hope lies only with Hashem. I may not be able to comprehend His word, His truth, but at least I wait for it with this hope. *Nafshi laHashem mishomrim laboker...*, "My soul waits for my Master more than the watchman waits for the morning, more than the watchman waits for the morning." There are those who, like watchmen, look toward the good times. They discount the evening, thinking there can be nothing positive in its veil of darkness. We stand in our gloom and see it as an opportunity to find Hashem even while we suffer. Unlike the paid watchers of this world, we find comfort within the detail that is our experience. No matter where we find ourselves now, we

know that the morning will come, and its first rays will disperse the evil.

*Yacheil Yisrael el Hashem...*, "Wait, Israel, upon Hashem, for with Hashem there is loving-kindness, and with Him there is much redemption." Lingering is no easy thing. Mankind expects instant answers and rapid understanding. But if we choose to "wait upon Hashem," we will find real loving-kindness. Hashem's love is not formulated by anything as transient as human feelings or notions. His love is infinite and has no self-serving motive. This brings its own redemption, even in the midst of our despair. "Much redemption" implies a redemption that spills over from one realm to the others, with no borders or boundaries.

*Vehu yifdeh es Yisrael mikol avonosav...*, "And He will redeem Israel from all its inequities." These final words sum it all up. We will be redeemed. Hashem is faithful to His word. Whatever iniquity we find ourselves in, no matter how far into the depths we have slid, we will be redeemed.

Our only task now is to accept this truth and never allow our focus to wander. All may be chaos, and our enemies may seem to be beyond all control. This is the nature of the night, yet we must seek, trust and wait for the morning. It will come, just as surely as the sun rises after every evening. The main thing is that we keep warm in its coldness by remaining wrapped within the comforter of Hashem's love.

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