

THE HOUSE THAT TRUTH BUILT

by Rabbi Label Lam

And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you and I will make your name great and you will be a blessing. And those that bless you will be blessed, and those that curse you will be cursed, and through you will be blessed all the families of the world. (Breishis 12:2-3)

Babe Ruth hit 714 home runs but only one stands out in legendary proportion. That is the home run he is reputed to have hit for a sick child, but not before having first pointed his bat towards center field. Why is that one distinguishable from all the hundreds of others? The one who hits the most home runs is also usually the one who strikes out the most since he swings the hardest. Sometimes he hits it big and sometimes he misses it big. However, when he calls the shot and hits it there that shows some modicum of control.

3700 years have passed since Avraham walked on the earth and a lot of history has transpired since such broad sweeping and open projections were made, such as "through you will be blessed all the families of the world." Innings later, but not quite a post-game report, let's check at least anecdotally the veracity of that statement.

Not less than John Adams the 2nd president writes in a letter in 1806; "I will insist that the Hebrews have done more to civilize men than any other nation. If I were an atheist and believed in blind eternal fate, I should still believe that fate had ordained the Jews to be the most essential instrument for civilizing nations. I should believe that that chance had ordered the Jews to preserve and propagate to all Mankind the doctrine of a supreme intelligent and wise Almighty sovereign of the universe which I believe to be the great essential principle of all morality and consequently of all civilization. They have given religion to three-quarters of the globe and influenced the affairs of Mankind more and more happily than any other nation, ancient or modern."

Maybe some people remember that during the Yom Kippur war in 1973, there was an oil embargo, oil prices sky-rocketed and bumper stickers began to appear reading, "We don't want Jews! We want oil!". A gentile named William Ikon wrote a letter to the editor of the Colorado Springs Gazette Telegraph that was subsequently published in 250 dailies throughout America. He wrote the following:

"Jews go home, G-d forbid that you should think that these remarks made by a few sick people expresses the opinion of all the people of America and you would pack your belongings and go. Jews go home. We do not want Jews. We want oil. But before you leave, could you do us a favor?!

Could you leave behind the vaccine formula of Dr. Jonas Salk before you go?! You would not want our children to be paralyzed by polio. Will you leave behind the capability you have shown government, in politics, your influential prowess, your good literature and your tasty food.

Please have pity on us. Remember it was from you that we learned the secret of how to develop great men as Einstein and Steinmetz and many others who are of great help to us. We owe you a lot for the atomic bomb, research satellites and perhaps we owe you our very existence. Instead of observing from the depths of our graves how Hitler old but glad passes through our streets relaxed in one of our Cadillacs if he would have succeeded to reach the A-bomb and not us.

On your way out Jews, could you do me one more favor? Could you pass by my house and take me with you? I'm not sure I could live a secure life in a land in which you are not found. If at any time you will have to leave, love will leave with you. Democracy will leave with you and essentially everything will leave with you. G-d will leave with you. If you pass by my house, please slow down and honk, because I'm going with you."

A reputation like this is not made in a single swing, a season, or a news cycle. It is a record perhaps more impressive than pointing or predicting a series. Its promise produced a more enduring dynasty and a history grander than that that built the house of Ruth. When it will be our time to "go home" for real it will become clear that it is not for a lack of oil or an abundance of desperate hate, but rather to revel and cheer aloud again in the house that truth built.

Good Shabbos!

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