

IN GERMANY!

by Rabbi Label Lam

And Yosef died and all his brothers, and all of that generation, and the children of Israel multiplied and swarmed and increased and grew very - very strong and the land became filled with them. (Shemos 1:6-7)

This description is not just a slice of ancient history. Rather the Torah is mapping out for us what can easily be titled, "the anatomy of an exile." After Yosef and his brothers and that whole generation, who knew grandfather Yaakov passed away, the next generation began to blunder into the general Egyptian population. They became enamored with Egyptian culture and were at risk of becoming lost for all time.

Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk ztl., the "Ohr Somayach" wrote in his commentary on the 26th chapter of Vayikra about this repeating pattern of Jewish history. As a young Torah scholar, decades before the war he writes the following prescient words. "Modern man thinks that Berlin is Jerusalem, but a fierce storm of destruction will emanate from Berlin and leave but a scant remnant. The survivors will disburse to other countries and Torah will strike new roots and young scholars will produce undreamed of accomplishments." Who could have imagined the hell fury that was lurking in the shadows at that time in Germany when so many felt so comfortable and welcome that the word "Jerusalem" was stricken from the Siddur.

One summer I arrived in Jerusalem with some 50 young American college students, many of whom were stepping foot on the holy land of Israel for the very first time. We gathered together closely in a meeting room on the campus of Ohr Somayach. With some good food in our stomachs a young man with a guitar came to entertain and entertain he did. Chaim Salenger played one song in particular that took me by surprise. I was seduced by the soft strumming of the guitar and his tender sweet voice. He gently he unleashed these powerful words- these tiny missiles loaded with meaning and tragic irony. Minus the music here are the lyrics of the song entitled, "Germany"

We are living, in the greatest land

The world has ever known

And my brother,

It appears that we have

Finally found a home
In this country, where a man is sure that
He is truly free
And there's never been a greater land
In all our memory
And we've finally found a home
In Germany.
There's no reason to remain forever
Separate and strange.
We can shed all of our shackles
And embrace the Modern Age
In this country
Where the people are so cultured and refined
And together we can live in perfect harmony
And find
That we'll always have a home
In Germany.
There are those who insist
With their stubborn minds
To hold tightly to the past
And they imagine they're unable
To compromise
All the ties that they hold fast,
To all their silly superstitions
And medieval lies.
How they foolishly believe in what they say
And how they foolishly go facing to

The eastern skies
To Jerusalem,
Where they believe
That they'll return someday.
But no longer
Shall we rely on fantasy or games
No- no longer
For Berlin is our Jerusalem today
And forever
As we prosper in this land of liberty
And we live and die upon the holy soil of Germany.
We will always have a home
We will always have a home
We will always have a home
in Germany.

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