

ANTI-SEMITISM, AGAIN

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

And he heard the words of Lavan's sons, saying, "Ya'akov has taken all that belonged to our father, and from what belonged to our father, he has amassed this entire fortune." (Bereishis 31:1)

I WAS "TREATED" last week to a video clip of some right-wing church newscaster commenting on the upcoming impeachment proceedings in the United States. The caption read, "Schiff and friends have given ammunition to the Jew haters!" And it was not exaggerating in the least.

A "Jew coup" was what the talking head called it. He blamed the attacks on President Trump as being Jew-originated, and then warned his "fellow" Americans to prepare. "The Jews are coming for you," he said, "and wherever they have, millions of Christians have always been killed." A classic falsehood and misrepresentation of history.

As I finished the clip, I wondered if the guy had since been arrested, but doubted it. I also wondered how many hundreds of thousands, if not millions of Christians have watched this masterful presentation of age-old church-generated vicious anti-Semitism, and bought it. "Guys like that still exist?" I asked myself out loud.

And then I turned my attention towards the subjects of the videos. I wondered if they had ANY inkling of how much danger their high profile and want-to-be-future-president tactics were endangering the Jews in America. I doubted that too, because people in such positions usually look at themselves as Americans much more than as Jews.

And when I was told about another American Jew who had been living a despicable life until his recent death, and all the negative publicity it created, I gulped a second time. He harmed so many people and his crimes involved so many high-ranking officials, for and against him, that his Jewish affiliation must have come up negatively on many occasions.

An anti-Semite doesn't really care if a Jew believes in God or not, or holds of Torah from Sinai or rejects the idea. A Jew may take note of this with respect to another Jew, and a religious one may look at a non-religious one as being "almost gentile." But a non-Jew, especially an anti-Semitic one, puts ALL Jews into one and the same category called "Jew," and ascribes all the conspiracies and plots against the Christian world to the WHOLE lot.

Then my mind went to the next level, the GOD level. We all know the only way to get many Jews to leave exile, comfortable OR painful, is through excessive anti-Semitism. At least that is the way it has

worked for the past 3500 years or so, going all the way back to Ya'akov Avinu in this week's parsha:

And he heard the words of Lavan's sons, saying, "Ya'akov has taken all that belonged to our father, and from what belonged to our father, he has amassed this entire fortune." And Ya'akov saw Lavan's countenance, that he was not disposed toward him as [he had been] yesterday and the day before. (Bereishis 31:1-2)

The truth is, this was not EXCESSIVE anti-Semitism. It didn't have to be. Ya'akov was one of the few people who understood it, what it was and where it came from. He knew that as much as Lavan and his sons couldn't stand him, and had to restrain themselves from harming him, it was really God Who had His hand on the valve of anti-Semitism.

In fact, that was EXACTLY how Ya'akov knew that it was God Who controlled the flow of hatred towards him. He was never fooled by the civil behavior of his father-in-law and brothers-in-law. He had no pretenses about their motivations and plans, which is why he knew that God was the One who had been keeping them at bay for the past 20 years.

Therefore, when Ya'akov Avinu saw that civility begin to dissipate, he knew it wasn't just Lavan having a bad day. It was Lavan being himself, which meant that God was stepping back somewhat, from overturning Lavan's inherent hateful nature. Ya'akov comprehended that it meant that history was at a turning point, and that it required a change in his own plans as well.

This is why on a dime, he decided to leave Lavan's home with all that he had. Anti-Ya'akovism meant that God was saying that his work was coming to an end, he had no more business there, and therefore no longer required any special Divine intervention to protect him. If he stayed, Ya'akov understood, he was on his own.

It is incomprehensible how, as a nation that has experienced so much anti-Semitism since its inception, that we do not spend time on this part of the Ya'akov story. The Talmud says that Mt. Sinai is called what it is because sinah—hatred of the Jewish people began there (Talmud 89a). Should we not spend some serious time understanding what this means, and how it can affect us throughout history, especially since the Torah tells us to (Devarim 32:7)?

How is it possible that a people with such a tortured history can take that history so lightly? One of the main lessons of the Holocaust is how man can be so "civilized," and yet so murderous when it comes to the Jews. How can we turn our backs on such an important survival message?

Even secular Jews. Just take a look at history. Secular Jews may distance themselves from their religious brothers and sisters, but the anti-Semites of history haven't. A Jew is a Jew is a Jew, they continue to say. When the Christian reporter called it a "Jew coup" against President Trump, he did not make a point of distinguishing which Jews he meant because in his mind, we're ALL the same.

He's not alone. We're also all the same in God's mind, so-to-speak. In terms of halachic culpability, it will depend upon what a person could have known about Torah but didn't. But in terms of who

belongs to His nation, it is all of us, and we really have no way, short of prophecy, to know who belongs more than whom.

This is why when they have come for us, they have come for ALL of us altogether. They don't come on behalf of themselves, as much as they think they do. God will deal with them for who they are and what they do, but let that not cloud the absolute reality. Anti-semitism is not a form of racism. It is a means of Divine communication. When it happens, we're best to give an ear to God, not to the anti-Semites. When it gets to the point that we have to watch out for THEM, it's because we didn't turn an ear to God when we should have, as Ya'akov did in this week's parsha.

For those who might be interested, "In Discussion" is a series of books on the weekly Torah portion. However, as the title makes clear, discussion is the means to make the point. The facts are true and the insights are real and fascinating. But the "cover story," though often based upon true accounts, has been imagined to hold the interest of the reader while teaching about the weekly Torah portion. Based upon the feedback of readers, the idea works well. You can now purchase the entire softcover set of five books, Bereishis through Devarim, at 20% off the retail price (softcover: \$70.75 less 20% equals \$56.60 plus \$15.00 shipping) or in PDF format (\$29.75 less 20% equals 23.80). They make a great and entertaining gift for the person who likes to learn (especially a Bar/Bat Mitzvah), you or someone you care about. Use [this link](#) for easy ordering.