

BS"D Parashat Be'ha'alotcha 5783

Beauty and the Beast

One who testifies falsely before a court of law reveals more about himself than whatever contribution he could make in the case; for now we know that he is untrustworthy and a liar without a conscience. So too, more than protesters howling their opposition to an issue reveals the nature of the issue, it reveals the nature of the protesters themselves.

The Gemara (Pesachim 49b) quotes the illustrious Rabbi Akiva:

אני רציתי שיהיה לי תלמיד חכם (אנכי רציתי שיהיה לי תלמיד חכם) כדי שאוכל לנשוטו כנשיטת חמור (אני רציתי שיהיה לי תלמיד חכם) כדי שאוכל לנשוטו כנשיטת חמור.
אני רציתי שיהיה לי תלמיד חכם (אנכי רציתי שיהיה לי תלמיד חכם) כדי שאוכל לנשוטו כנשיטת חמור (אני רציתי שיהיה לי תלמיד חכם) כדי שאוכל לנשוטו כנשיטת חמור.

When I was still ignorant of the Torah, I wished that one should bring me a talmid chacham (Torah Scholar) so I could bite him with the force of a donkey (stronger than the bite of a dog).

The point that the great Rabbi was making was that Jews who are far removed from Torah develop an animosity bordering on hate towards those who are spiritually superior.

The “narrator” of the Gemara adds:

אלו שאינם יודעים את התורה, הם יושבים וקוראים את התורה וקוראים את התורה וקוראים את התורה, ואלו שאינם יודעים את התורה, הם יושבים וקוראים את התורה וקוראים את התורה וקוראים את התורה.

Those who are ignorant (of Torah Knowledge) despise Torah

scholars even more than the gentiles hate Jews; and the hate of their ignorant wives toward Torah scholars is even harsher.

Then the Gemara quotes a B'reita (a Ta'niac work)

.אֲשֶׁר הָיָה לוֹ בְּעוֹלָם אֶחָד – אֲשֶׁר הָיָה לוֹ בְּעוֹלָם אֶחָד

(Experience proves) that the degree of hate felt by a Torah student who has left the fold towards his former colleagues surpasses them all.

Behaving beastly vs. seeking beauty

The negative feelings harbored by Jews who are ignorant of the Torah towards Torah scholars and Torah observers in general, are less of a religious issue and more of a psychiatric one.

Does their animosity stem from profound feelings of inadequacy on being unable to inculcate the breadth and depth of Jewish studies?

– Or is it a character weakness, that causes them to refuse to give the time and “suffer the deprivation” that it takes to become a Torah scholar, when the allure of the secular world’s immediate gratification beckons to them?

– Or perhaps their inability to believe that there are manifold worlds and universes in dimensions different than the limited ones we experience?

– Or the super moralist who cannot believe in a just and moral creator who permits evil and nature’s destructive forces to exist uncontrolled?

- Or perhaps a reaction to overbearing religious parents and teachers.
- Or uncontrolled sensuous compulsions.
- Or any one of the above or any combination of them!

Our rabbis described the emotions shared by the entire nation when standing under Mount Sinai to receive the Torah – we were united “as one man and one heart”. But today those who oppose the Torah and demonstrate their feelings in front of religious individuals and communities come as “many men and women each with a different heart”, with different personal interests and emotions whose unity very quickly dissipates.

It is essential to emphasize that those who protest against Chareidim also protest against religious-Zionists who serve in the most dangerous units of the army; because they reject the authenticity of the 3000-year-old covenant between the Creator and the Jewish nation and rue the day they were born Jews and Israelis.

When I see the faces, the dress, and the unbridled conduct in the demonstrators in Bnei Brak and elsewhere, the words of the Shacharit (morning) prayer immediately come to my mind...

“All the nations are as nothing before You”, as it is written...

But we are Your nation, the people of Your Covenant:

The children of Avraham Your beloved, to whom You swore on

Mount Moriah;

The descendants of Yitzchak, his only son who was

bound upon the altar;

The community of Ya’akov, Your firstborn, whose name You called

*Yisrael and Yeshurun because of Your love for him (Ya'akov)
and
Your delight in him.*

*Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to thank, praise, and
glorify You,
to bless, to sanctify, and to offer praise and thanksgiving
to Your Name.*

*Fortunate are we! How good is our portion, how pleasant our
lot,*

*and how beautiful our heritage! Fortunate are we who, early
in the*

morning and in the evening, twice each day, declare:

יְהוָה יְהוָה 'א 'א יְהוָה יְהוָה

Hear, O Yisrael, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One."

How fortunate are we who are totally dedicated to the God of Yisrael and are the torchbearers of His Torah from that earth-shaking, momentous day at Mount Sinai for the Jewish nation and for all humanity, to the present, and forever into the future. We pray that the protesters find their way back to Jewish normalcy and rededicate their lives to protesting the wayward paths that some of our Jewish brethren have adopted.

In 1964, the Pope came to the holy land of Yisrael, but refused to come and pay his respects to Chief Rabbi Yitzchak Nissim Z"L, insisting that the Chief Rabbi come to him. The Chief Rabbi refused and quoted the prophet Micha 4,5:

יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה
:יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה-אֵל 'א יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה

Let all the nations walk in the name of their gods, but we

will walk in the name of the Lord our God (HaShem) forever and ever.

As hurtful as it is, we have no control over Jews who stray from the Torah, but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God (HaShem) forever and ever.

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

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