

Va'aira 5781

BS"D Parashat Va'aira 5781

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Traumatic Events of the Past & Present

People experience traumatic episodes with various physiological and psychological repercussions. Some experiences become relegated to a dark area of the subconscious never to re-appear again in one's window of consciousness. Memories of others, like those who went through the atrocities of the Shoah, are forever engraved in their consciousness, as one of the witnesses at the John Demjanjuk trial said, "if you were not in Treblinka you cannot enter; if you were there you can never leave". And the third type of traumatic memory emerges from time to time from the subconscious to one's consciousness brought about by association with other thoughts.

I would like to share with you, dear reader, an autobiographical traumatic experience which occurred when I was 12 years old, which was not yesterday.

My family moved to 1710 West 2nd street, corner of Quentin Road in Flatbush when I was 5 years old and my brother Meir was 10, when our father became the rabbi of the Shaarei Tfila shul on West 1st street where he served for the next 30 years.

Our street consisted of first- and second-generation Catholics – Italian and Irish, with only 4 Jewish families.

Our next-door neighbors were Italians by the name of Colombo. They had a son called Charles, like his father; he was

nicknamed Junior. He was one year older than I. Whenever Junior saw me, he would call out "dirty Jew", which sent me home in tears. One day my mother found out that Mrs. Colombo's father was a Jew (not her mother). My mother told me that the next time the little shaygetz called me "dirty Jew", to give him the details of his yichus (genealogy). It happened the very next day. He made his usual neighborly statement and then I said to him "your grandfather is also a dirty Jew".

He went home, and from that day we became the best of friends. Our bedroom windows faced each other across a narrow alley, and we would blabber until going to sleep.

Now to the point. When I was 12 and Junior was 13, we went to the local public park to play basketball, as we often did. It was about a ten-minute walk from home. As we were playing, a little shaygetz about 10, came to the court and began to interfere with the game. I, or maybe Junior, scared him off. Soon after a gang of older teenagers appeared and began pushing us around. I was wearing my kippa, so they concluded that Junior was also a "dirty Jew". Then began the fist fights. I started to run but was able to only make it to the metal fence surrounding the yard. They threw me down on the ground and began kicking my whole body. I recall saying to myself that if I don't get away, I will die here. I counted to three and suddenly got up and ran towards the little shack where the park attendant kept his supplies, with the gang right behind. The attendant saw what was happening. He shoved me into the shack closed the door and left.

Now try to imagine being there. The shack was small, about 2 meters square with a little window high up. The gang surrounded the shack and were pounding on the walls and door, screaming like the Nazis that they were. I knew it wouldn't take long before the door would give in. There I was, a 12 year old boy in a tiny hut surrounded by numerous goyim with murder in their eyes. During those moments I could have been in Spain or in the Rhine Valley during the Crusades or in any

of the many pogroms in our history; but I was in the park on Macdonald Ave. between avenue R and S in Brooklyn in the land of the free and the home of the brave.

Suddenly I heard a police siren and the goyim scattered. The police opened the door and brought me home.

Junior had escaped and told my parents, who then called the police. The doctor said that I had a concussion and sent me to bed.

A few hours later Junior's mother came to our home to see me. After inquiring how I was she said, "I want you to know that not all Catholics are like that", and I thought to myself, not all, just most.

Reliving the experience of being in a tiny hut surrounded by goyim who wanted to beat me to a pulp is a very traumatic experience, especially for a 12-year-old. It was my personal "Kristal Nacht". I recovered physically and was able to push away the reality of my feelings of those terrible minutes. However, twice in the past I relived those horrible moments.

Once about 30 years ago, while visiting in the U.S., my dear friend Dr. Frank Laifer bought tickets for us to a Giant's football game. Before leaving the house, he handed me a Giant cap to replace of my kippa, so I should not look Jewish (??).

The area where we sat was filled with goyim. After the first quarter they all smelled of beer, both men and women. By half time they were running to the bathroom in a pattern of beer, bathroom, beer, bathroom ...

Many showed various degrees of drunkenness as they began shouting and jumping; just not very nice.

At some moment, the thought unwittingly came to my mind; what if one of them would yell out there are Jews here, let's get

them. Then the feeling of being in the park attendant's little shack surrounded by half humans half animal gripped me once again.

The second time the feeling came over me was last week when I saw on TV the mob rushing towards the Capital, shoving the guards, and trampling the fabric of society that keeps the States united. I saw in my mind's eye the same mob running towards a Jewish neighborhood with murder in their eyes.

There is much anger and frustration in the U.S. today, and it's not going away. The US is a patch-quilt of ethnic groups whose common denominator is the great American dream that one day they could be financially comfortable in their little houses with all the other perks that make goyim happy. However, a society like that is like walking on eggshells which could shatter in one second.

Jewish history is a repetitive pattern of sin and punishment, sin and exile.

But today HaShem has provided us with the ability to break this vicious cycle. We are able to return home to Medinat Yisrael, and if we are wise enough, we can build on the dreams of 2000 years to recreate our nation of old under HaShem and His Torah.

This is the OBLIGATION of every Jew, and there are NO EXCUSES. Life is in Eretz Yisrael. The alternative is to be locked in a little shack surrounded by goyim who want to release the deep frustrations created in their dysfunctional societies on the "JUDE".

The three Bs have merged into one – B HERE

JLMM Jewish Lives Matter More

Shabbat Shalom and Chodesh Tov,

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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