

Vayechi 5782

BS"D Parashat Vayechi 5782

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When inhibitions of hatred are released

The Holocaust is the most cruel calamity to befall the Jewish nation, outranking even the destruction of the two Batei Hamikdash, as explained in Midrash Eicha 4 in its analysis of chap. 79 in Tehillim. The chapter begins with, "Mizmor Le'Asaf" – a song of praise (to Hashem) composed by Asaf (the Levi). The Midrash points out that this introductory sentence is totally incompatible with the text, which deals with the projected destruction of the Bet Hamikdash. It should read "Kina Le'Asaf" – a lamentation composed by Asaf – and not "Mizmor le'Asaf" – a song of praise composed by Asaf.

The Midrash explains that the destruction of the Batei Hamikdash is certainly a calamity of the first order. However, even within the context of this punishment, Hashem showed His mercy by venting His anger on the wood and stones of the structure rather than destroying the people responsible for the destruction.

From here we see that even when we sin to the degree that Hashem sees fit to severely punish us, He vents His anger on our material possessions and not with the mass annihilation of His Chosen Nation. So, the unescapable question is, how did it come about in Hashem's world that six million Jews, including one-and-a-half million children and millions of God-fearing Torah Jews, were sent to olam haba through the chimneys of Auschwitz-Birkenau and the other death camps?

Now, if one should make a determination that the Shoah was a

punishment for the sins of the Jewish people, he would be hard pressed to explain why since all Jews are mutual guarantors (kol Yisrael arayvim ze la'ze) only the Jews of Europe and parts of North Africa suffered such a fate, whereas the Jews of the U.S. and Eretz Yisrael were not only spared but enjoyed good lives.

The matter of the Shoah is and will remain dominant in Jewish thought and behavior until the Mashiach arrives. In all humility, I wish to state my personal understanding of these events, which consoles me in some small way when facing the unspeakable horror of the Shoah.

The Torah states (Shmot 22:5)

וְאֵלֶּה תִּשְׁמַע אֶת־תֹּורַת־יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר־יְהוָה בָּרוּךְ־ הוּא צִוָּה לְעַמּוֹד לְעַלְמָה וְאֵלֶּה תִּשְׁמַע אֶת־תֹּורַת־יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר־יְהוָה בָּרוּךְ־ הוּא צִוָּה לְעַמּוֹד לְעַלְמָה.

If a fire spreads to weeds (in another's field) and devours bales of wheat or uncut wheat or the field, the negligent perpetrator must make payment.

The Gemara explains the underlying meaning of the verse. The “weeds” are the evil doers of the world. When God decrees that these “weeds” be destroyed, the free hand of the angel of death begins with the “wheat” – the righteous who happen to be there among the evil doers.

I reject any allegation that my fellow Jewish brothers and sisters sinned to a degree which justified the horrors of the Shoah. Some “experts” at counting other people's sins place the blame on assimilation. But never has Jewish history encountered the numbers and rate of assimilation and intermarriage found today among the Jews of the United States, yet they continue to thrive. Other sin counters put the blame on Zionism, while others, on the lack of Zionism. Jewish feelings of guilt know no bounds, as defined by “Jewish

“Alzheimer’s” – that’s where one forgets everything except the guilt.

I submit that the Shoah was not a “Jewish thing.” It was a decree made by Hashem, and put into effect with the First World War, that the evil descendants of Eisav should put an end to one another. Russians should kill Germans, and Germans Englishmen, and the English should kill Austrians, etc. The Second World War was simply a continuation of the First, after an extended cease fire. We were turned into soap, because the leash on insanity was released and the Jews were caught up in it BECAUSE WE WERE THERE! And we were there, because we did not understand that when Eisav kills Eisav, it is no place for Ya’akov to be.

When the inhibitions of hatred are released, then the ever-present hatred of Jews rises to the fore and Eisav seeks to put an end to Ya’akov.

Two conclusions can be drawn from the above. If you reject the proposition that the two world wars were death sentences decreed on the goyim, and we were swept into it just because we were there, you are left with two very bad options:

- 1) To believe that the Jews of Europe sinned to the extent that 1,500,000 little children had to die.
- 2) The whole matter is beyond our comprehension. So, let’s just continue building bigger and more expensive holocaust museums and go back to living.

If you live in a goyish society, then no matter how frum you are, you could find yourself one day swept up in the tsunamis and 9/11’s of that nation.

Kaddish Day

Today, the tenth of Tevet was designated by Israel’s Chief Rabbinate to be the General Kaddish Day when kaddish is said

for the untold number of Jews whose day of death is not known.

I view the designation of Asara Be'Tevet as the General Kaddish Day by our rabbis as a prophetic act. Our long tragic history begins with the siege of Yerushalayim by Nevuchadnetzer, King of Babylon, in 588 BCE. It was followed by his destruction of the first holy Temple and the Babylonian exile of 70 years. After our return to Eretz Yisrael, the second Bet Hamikdash was destroyed in the year 70 CE by the Romans and the long exile of 2000 years. The concluding tragic episode in our history is the Shoah, when three years later Medinat Yisrael was established and the restoration of AM Yisrael to our intimate relationship with the Creator began.

Asara Be'tevet and the day of Kaddish for the victims of the Shoah – Nevuchadnetzer and Hitler – the beginning and end of HaShem's "hester panim" (concealment). And now the renewal of our historic mission to join the spiritual and physical worlds of HaShem through our fulfillment of the mitzvot in Eretz Yisrael.

Shabbat Shalom
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