

Introduction

Part 4

The Spiritual Significance of Anti-Semitism

Back in 2018 in the United States of America in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania there was a massacre at the Tree of Live Congregation in which eleven Jewish people lost their lives at the hand of a lone gunman. Reports of witnesses that lived said the gunman had shouted “*All Jews must die!*” There was a hatred in the heart of the gunman that was so great that it led him to kill innocent people. The question for us today is “*What is unique about antisemitism that causes one to have such hatred towards the Jewish people and Israel?*” and “*Why does this prejudice or racism boil down to the desire of extermination?*” When we note what has happened historically in relation to anti-Semitism, we have to ask ourselves “*What is it about Jewish life and the existence of the Jewish people that is so abhorring?*” There is a very deep spiritual problem for those who hate Israel and the Jewish people! I believe these things are tied to the Torah and the anti-Torah theologies that have been developed over the centuries. Let’s consider something the prophet Isaiah said in *Isaiah 56:1-7*.

Isaiah 56:1-7

כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה שְׁמְרוּ מִשְׁפַּט וְעֲשׂוּ צְדָקָה כִּי־קְרוּבָה יִשׁוּב־

56:1 *Thus said the LORD: I Observe what is right and do what is just; For soon My salvation shall come, And my deliverance be revealed.* אֲשֶׁרִי אֲנוֹשׁ יַעֲשֶׂה-אֶת וּבֶן-אָדָם יַחֲזִיק בָּהּ שְׁמֵר לְהַגְלוֹת:

56:2 *Happy is the man who does this, The man who holds fast to it: Who keeps the sabbath and does not profane it, And stays his hand from doing any evil.* וְאֵל-יֵאמֶר כֹּה- הַנֶּזְכָּר הַנִּלְוָה אֶל-יְהוָה לֵאמֹר הַבְּדֵל יַבְדִּילֵנִי יְהוָה מֵעַל עַמּוֹ

56:3 *Let not the foreigner say, Who has attached himself to the LORD, "The LORD will keep me apart from His people"; And let not the eunuch say, "I am a withered tree."* כִּי-

56:4 *For thus said the LORD: "As for the eunuchs who keep My sabbaths, Who have chosen what I desire And hold fast to My covenant—*

56:5 *I will give them, in My House And within My walls, A monument and a name Better than sons or daughters. I will give them an everlasting name Which shall not perish.* וַבְּגֵי הַנֶּזְכָּר הַנִּלְוִים עַל-יְהוָה לְשַׁרְתּוֹ וְלֹאֲהַבָּה אֶת-

56:6 *As for the foreigners Who attach themselves to the LORD, To minister to Him, And to love the name of the LORD, To be His servants— All who keep the sabbath and do not profane it, And who hold fast to My covenant—*

56:7 *I will bring them to My sacred mount And let them rejoice in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices Shall be welcome on My altar; For My House shall be called A house of prayer for all peoples."* וְהֵבִיאוּתָיִם אֶל-יְהוָה קִדְשֵׁי וְשִׁמְחָתָיִם בְּבַיִת תְּפִלָּתִי עוֹלֹתֵיהֶם וְזִבְחֵיהֶם לְרִצּוֹן עַל-מִזְבֵּחַ בְּחַיֵּי כִּי בֵיתִי בֵית-תְּפִלָּה יִקְרָא לְכָל־הָעַמִּים:

the Mourner's Kaddish, also known as the Mourner's Prayer. This prayer is recited in honor of the deceased. This prayer focuses on life, the promises of God, and honor of family and individuals of the Jewish faith. The Kaddish has been said for nearly 2,000 years to honor and commemorate parents and loved ones who have passed away. What is interesting is before saying Kaddish, a portion of the Torah is read. Reciting the Mourner's Kaddish is one of Judaism's greatest mitzvahs because it is said to be a true act of kindness since kindness is being performed to those who can not return the favor. What is interesting about this prayer is that it says nothing about the Jewish people or death. It is about the recognition of God and His holy Word and His promises to His people. This takes us back again to the root and reason why anti-Semitism is a spiritual malady. The lesson we learn from these things is how the evil one wants to destroy the people of God. The reason being, those who are the people of God bear His testimony throughout all the world, a testimony which draws men to the truth! In the Passover Haggadah we read how the rabbis emphasize that in every generation the Jewish people face anti-Semitism and persecution. The message from the Torah (contained in the Passover) is how in every generation there are those who rise up against us to destroy us, and the God of Israel, the Holy One blessed be He, delivers us from their hand! Historically, Pharaoh had the role of persecuting Israel in Egypt, and Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, had the role of destroying the Beit HaMikdash (The Temple in Jerusalem). Both of these men went to great lengths to persecute the Jewish people through the eyes of anti-Semitism and the spiritual forces that were at work in their lives. Most people are asleep, unaware of these things as having been taught replacement theologies. Theologically, the early Church Fathers laid the groundwork for much of the subsequent anti-Semitism today. For example, St. John of Chrysostom (Archbishop of Constantinople, 347-407 AD), known as "*The Golden Mouth*" for his eloquence as a preacher, called the Jews "*godless, idolaters, child-murderers, guilty of stoning the prophets, and committing ten thousand crimes.*" Gregory of Nyssa (bishop of Nyssa, 335-395 AD) added that Jews are "*Murderers of the lord, assassins of the prophets, rebels and detesters of G-d, companions of the devil, race of vipers, darkeners of the mind, Sanhedrin of demons,*

accursed, detested, enemies of all that is beautiful.” When we read the teachings of the Church fathers, it becomes very apparent how anti-Semitic they were as their words are filled with hatred towards the Jewish people.

Isaiah spoke of God drawing men to His house. The *Talmud Bavli in Berakhot 7a* speaks concerning the house of God how this is a place of peace and prayer:

Talmud Bavli Berakhot 7a

Along the same lines, Rabbi Yohanan said in the name of Rabbi Yosei: From where is it derived that the Holy One, Blessed be He, prays? As it is stated: “I will bring them to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in the house of My prayer” (Isaiah 56:7). The verse does not say the house of their prayer, but rather, “the house of My prayer”; from here we see that the Holy One, Blessed be He, prays.

Note how the place which God is drawing all people is a place of prayer, peace, and joy. The rabbis say the Lord God Himself, the Holy One Blessed be He, is a praying God! These things speak to why the evil one wants to destroy God’s people. The hope that we have, from since the beginning of creation, is where we find the impossible, we also find God can made the possible happen!

The Torah portion Va’etchanan (וַאֲתַחֲנֶן) opens with Moshe pleading to the Lord to be allowed to enter into the Promised Land even though the Lord had told him he would not be allowed to enter (see *Bamidbar / Numbers 20:8-12*). The word va’etchanan (וַאֲתַחֲנֶן) is derived from the root verb chanan (חנן) meaning to urgently ask, and from the word chen (חן << חנן << וְחַנּוּן) meaning mercy/grace. This leads us to understand how seeking God in prayer is due to His mercy and grace and not due to personal merit. In the Torah portion Va’etchanan, Moshe is asking the Lord God to show him grace by reversing the decree that God had made forbidding him to enter the Promised Land. These things speak to the Lord who is merciful (*Shemot / Exodus 34*) and the promises of the Messianic redemption and deliverance spoken of in *Isaiah 56*. The prophet Zechariah also

foresaw the future fulfillment of the promise of the coming consolation of Israel. We also read Isaiah saying according to *Isaiah 40:1*, :אָמַר אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: 40: 1 Comfort, oh comfort My people, Says your God. (Sefaria) Note how the words Nachamu Nachamu Ami “*be comforted be comforted my people*” is repeated. This marks a time of joy in the comfort of God despite the tribulations that come our way. The glory of God is exemplified in His working in our lives. This is why the evil one wants to distance us away from the promises of God found in His Torah.

Isaiah 43:7 speaks to the glory of God in His creation of each one of us. When we take this in context of the hatred of God’s people, it becomes clear why the evil one wants to destroy us. Many places throughout Scripture speak to the way man “*glorifies*” God because through man, God’s glory can be seen in things such as love, charity, heroism and so forth. We were created for these things, the very attributes that belong to God are given to us. (*2 Corinthians 4:7*). We are like vessels which “*contain*” His glory. We are able to do all the things we are able to do because God is our source of strength. The Lord God interacts in our lives in order to demonstrate His love. This is why the Torah emphasizes things like love, mercy, grace, and charity, because the Lord God reveals Himself to us through the material world as we live and interact in different ways to different people. David wrote according to *Tehillim / Psalms 19:1-4* saying, “*The heavens are telling of the glory of God and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands; day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their utterances to the end of the world.*” We as God’s creation are designed to bring Him glory. this is why it should be obvious there are underlying spiritual forces that are at work in the hearts of those who hate the Torah and the people of God!

These things reveal to us the significance of the question “*What is it about Jewish life and the existence of the Jewish people that is so abhorring?*” This is tied to the Torah and the anti-Torah theologies because there are seven reasons why the Torah has been given that the evil one hates:

1. To demonstrate the Holiness and Righteousness of God
2. The holiness of His people
3. To protect and provide for His people
4. To reveal our guilt and give knowledge of sin
5. To show us that our goodness and good works cannot save us
6. To lead us to the Messiah, the deliverer of God
7. To be written our hearts as the result of the Gospel

The Torah was given as a way to explain our relationship with God in covenant form. The major themes that come out of the Torah is how God is faithful and the people are not. We rest and rely upon the mercy, the grace of God! This demonstrates the holiness and righteousness of God towards his people. The Torah was given as a way to help us to understand how to live before a holy God. We are to separate our ways from the ways of the nations. This does not mean we are to be intolerant of other people, but that we are to seek the ways of God in peace, truth, justice, and righteousness. The Torah was given to protect and provide for God's people. The Torah provides restrictions in ethics and morality, and reveals to us the meaning of sin being the disobedience to God's commands. The revelation of the nature of sin, understanding what it means to sin, to disobey God, this reveals to us our own guilt having given us the knowledge of sin. (*Romans 7:7-9*) We recognize the significance of our inability to keep God's commands which is why Paul wrote the Torah is what aims us (i.e. the end goal, telos) towards the Messiah. (*Romans 10:4*) This is the Gospel message contained in the Torah, the Messiah, and God dwelling in our midst. Through faith we believe, and the Lord God sends His Holy Spirit to dwell in our lives, to empower us to overcome sin. Paul calls the Torah a School Teacher or guardian that leads us to the Messiah, (*Galatians 3:24*) consistent with the Greek text according to *Romans 10:4*. The Torah produces in us a humility that shows our utter helplessness before God and the need for a redeemer. In the new covenant of the Messiah Yeshua, the Torah is written upon our

Digging Deeper into Torah

hearts (*Hebrews 8:10*), which does not mean that the commands end, but that we fulfill, uphold, and establish God's commands (*Romans 3:31*) with God's helping us to do so! It is in this way that the Lord God pours out his mercy and grace into our lives by His Son Yeshua. Those who believe in Yeshua as their redeemer and savior begin to be changed from the inside out as they honor God who loved and saved them! This love is demonstrated through obedience, but it is the obedience that God works in our lives, since without the Spirit of God in our lives obedience is impossible. The message of the Torah, and ultimately all of Scripture, is found in the love that God has for His people, and this provides insight into the reason why the spiritual forces in this world seek to destroy God's people. The Torah and the Gospel message go hand in hand, and anti-Semitism has no part in the lives of God's people. If there is anti-Torah sentiment, or anti-Semitic feelings towards Israel, there is a much deeper spiritual problem that is at work! Having hatred of this type will separate and take one out of a relationship with God!