

The Triumph of Bigotry

The mark of Cain is stamped upon our foreheads. Across the centuries, our brother Abel was lain in blood which we drew, and shed tears we caused by forgetting Thy love. Forgive us, Lord, for the curse we falsely attributed to their name as Jews. Forgive us for crucifying Thee a second time in their flesh. For we knew not what we did.

A prayer for forgiveness written by Pope John XXIII.

Pope John was referring to the centuries of hatred spewed by the Church against the Jewish people. It was a beautiful prayer, a long time in coming, which helped to change the attitude of the mainstream Catholic church.

Anti-Semitism has been described as the world's oldest mental illness. In the Bible, Abraham had to fend off the attacks of nearby residents who accused him of stealing their well water for his flocks. Abraham was an object of scorn and derision because he had become successful as a shepherd and was spreading the word of a G-d, a G-d who was not carved in stone or wood. Suspicion and greed lurked at Abraham's doorstep. Yet, it was Abraham who bravely confronted G-d and argued, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?"

The Jews were enslaved in Egypt by a despot who claimed that the Jews peacefully living as shepherds in that part of Egypt known as Goshen might align themselves with Egypt's enemies. "Dual loyalty" is a well-known anti-Semitic canard.

While the Greeks were said to have referred to the Jews as the "philosopher people," that did not stop the campaign of Hellenism to quash Jewish independent thinking and practices. The Romans borrowed their philosophy from the Greeks and during the course of many wars against the Jews, killed hundreds of thousands of Judeans.

The church inherited the world's oldest superstition and helped to create a new dimension of hatred against the Jews which eventually blossomed into Britain and Western Europe expelling the Jewish community from many nations. The Jewish communities that survived in Europe fled to Eastern Europe where they were subject to pogroms and centuries of killing. The Jews of North Africa, India and China fared somewhat better, so long as they were willing to be subservient to those with whom they lived.

Only recently, we read the mainstream and tabloid coverage of Megyn Kelly being fired by NBC because of her racially insensitive comments on television. However, it is difficult to find any non-Jewish mainstream media disapproval of recent comments by Reverend Louis Farrakhan who said that "I am not an anti-Semite; I am anti-termite." The term "termites" for "Jews" is a well-known anti-Semitic symbol frequently used by the Nazis as justification for killing Jews. Comparing Jews to termites or other insects

that do not deserve to live was not invented by the Germans. Where has the public outrage been?

On the same day as the massacre at Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, the Islamic Jihad launched 36 missiles against Israel from the Hamas controlled Gaza Strip. There was virtually nothing about this in the United States media, which pays little attention to daily attempts to annihilate the 6 million Jews living in Israel. Instead, American college campuses and much of the left-wing media in general excoriates Israel, defaming it for crimes that have never taken place. Israel has become, for many modern anti-Semites, a convenient symbol to justify spewing hatred on Jewish communities throughout the United States. The threat to the Jewish people do not know the boundary of left or right wing.

What is the anecdote to this ancient hatred? I heard a marvelous answer given by a Lutheran minister in Montoursville some years ago at a Holocaust memorial service. The minister told his congregant that whenever she hears bigotry or racism, she should stand up and protest it. That is a good, although limited, start. Public education in churches and schools which would include an explanation of the historical bias against the Jewish people would be of value. The most effective way for the Jewish people to protect themselves is not through weapons training or political discourse alone, but by virtue of fidelity and loyalty to Jewish observance and continuity. It has been written, unfortunately, with absolute correctness, that assimilation by the Jewish people since WWII has resulted in the loss of more Jews than through persecution. This is a hard fact for many in the Jewish community to swallow. If we do not educate our children to stand up for Jewish causes and support the teaching of Jewish scripture and values, then the Jewish people will continue to be the whipping post for every lunatic. It is abysmal and sad how little most Jewish people know about their own history, legacy and holy books. How many people could name one book in the Talmud?; and yet it is that great work which has assured the survival of the Jewish people through the millennia by expounding upon and interpreting the Bible, keeping the Bible vital and relevant.

The survival of the Jewish people will come through the “still small voice” of an understanding and observance of our own basic tenets. We need to be able to stand up to bigots, racists, and the ignorant to be able to explain our own faith and tradition not only to others, but to ourselves as well. The survival of the Jewish people over the last 3,500 years has been made possible by our own literacy and obligatory patterns of behavior, not because anyone left us alone to become lost among the annals of societies that have disappeared into the great morass of earth’s population.

Am Yisrael Chai, the nation of Israel lives as one people worldwide, indivisible, proud, and able to stand up against those who seek our destruction.

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