

FROM THE EDITOR

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By all accounts, anti-Semitism is on the rise around the world. But, should we really be so surprised? Do we honestly expect things to change somehow over time, for the world to be satisfied that enough Jewish blood has been spilled?

The Beis HaLevi writes¹ that the hatred of the nations of the world for the Jewish people (ie. anti-Semitism) is because of our very existence. The proof? The wicked Eisav fought with his twin brother, Yaakov, while they were still in their mother's womb, where there was nothing to define Yaakov apart from his very essence!

Don't be fooled. The nations of the world don't hate us because we're different.

It's not because we practice bris milah (circumcision) or avoid certain foods and don't work on Saturdays. And it won't help in the least to make what has been the classic mistake throughout history: to assimilate, chas v'shalom (G-d forbid), and to try and become more like them. Their hatred isn't based on anything; they hate us simply because we are, regardless of how much we try to be like them.

As long as there are Jews in the world, as long as we exist, there will always be anti-Semitism. No amount of education or PR campaigns will change this.

The same battle that the Chashmonaim courageously fought to preserve our spiritual existence – to fight against assimilation – continues until this very day. But, as much as we mourn and cry over the tremendous amount of Jewish blood that was shed in the Holocaust and other such tragedies, the irony is that we have lost far more Jews to assimilation than to anti-Semitism. Or, to put it differently, as much as they hate us, we seem to hate ourselves even more.

So, what should our response be to an anti-Semitic attack like the tragedy in Pittsburgh – or, for that matter, anytime a Jew is killed?

As I struggled to find what to say, Hashem brought Rabbi Yisroel Kaye into my car and he played for me a sicha² (a talk) by Rabbi Shlomo Diamond, Rosh Kollel in Deal, New Jersey. My heartfelt thanks to Rabbi Kaye for sharing Rabbi Diamond's profoundly moving and inspirational sicha with me, whose response I'll excerpt and summarise here in an abridged fashion (any errors are my own):

When we hear about an attack on Jews, chas v'shalom, first and foremost our initial reaction should be rachmanus (compassion). Our brothers were killed – that means that we are being killed. We need to feel what they and their families are going through – to feel like our own relative was just killed. This is how a person must feel when other Jews are attacked, wherever and whenever Jews are killed, be it in the USA or Israel, etc.

We're meant to look at this incident – an incident at a conservative shul – like the incident in Har Nof that happened a few years ago, when they killed people who were davening Shemoneh Esrei while wearing tallis and tefillin; we're meant to look at this incident the exact same way – not a degree less.

The Nazi who killed them – do you think he knew that they were conservative Jews? He went to a famous shul and he killed them because they were Jews!

The same reaction that we had when those tzaddikim were killed in Har Nof while davening is the same reaction that we should have when 11 Jews in a conservative shul are killed. They died 'Al Kiddush Hashem' (sanctifying G-d's name); they died solely because they were Jews and for no other reason. Now those tzaddikim are with Hashem.

We cannot understand why Hashem does things; such matters are hidden from our eyes. Until a navi (prophet) comes to tell us why something happened, we can't understand it or explain it. We have no idea what Hashem is doing. We don't know why it happened in Har Nof and we don't know why it happened [in Pittsburgh]!

There was an attack against Yidden (Jews) – good people! People who were in shul! When Jews are killed in a shul, it's an attack against Klal Yisrael (the entire Jewish people)! It's a warning for us. Our primary response has to be to strengthen our Torah study and our tefillah (prayer). We need to daven that Hashem should protect all Yidden.

May Hashem watch over the Jewish people wherever we may be found throughout the world. As for all those who design against us evil or otherwise, or whose evil designs against others will affect us no matter how tangentially, may Hashem nullify such designs and make our enemies impotent. May we know no more sorrow and may Hashem comfort all those in pain. May we share bsoros tovot (good tidings). From everyone at JL, a freilichen Chanukah.

ROBERT SUSSMAN, EDITOR

PHOTOGRAPH: SUPPLIED

¹Quoted by Rabbi Shimshon Dovid Pincus in Tiferes Shimshon al Hatorah (Devarim, Parshas Vayeilech, Pasuk 31:17)

²To hear Rabbi Diamond's complete, unabridged treatment of the subject, including the halachic basis for his comments, visit: goo.gl/Qcg53x

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IN HONOUR OF
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KOSHER GOURMET
FOR THIS MONTH,
SHARES RECIPES FOR
COOKIES MADE WITH
CHOCOLATE GELT AND COOKIES SHAPED
LIKE DREIDELS - SEE PAGE 66. PHOTO BY
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