

# Shemos

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The Armenians tried to get the same kind of attention for the genocide they suffered during World War I at the hands of the Turks, as the Jews did after the Holocaust. But most people who saw the signs hanging around the Armenian Quarter in the Old City recalling it probably just moved on, barely wondering what they were talking about, or who the Armenians are.

To begin with, “only” one million Armenians marched to their deaths, as opposed to six million Jews. Second of all, who are the Armenians? It’s not as if they have a history of being persecuted everywhere they have gone for thousands of years now like the Jews. In fact, had they not posted their signs I would never have known about what happened to them, and most people today still do not. They seem only important to themselves.

Not the Jews, though. Not everyone may have the *right* impression of them, but just about everyone has *some* impression of them. For a tiny people, they have attracted far more world attention than they have deserved proportionally, or even wanted. And for a people that has contributed so much good to society and so little bad (other than Hollywood), they’re sure hated a lot. Whether we’re talking about straight up hatred, or jealousy masquerading as hatred, so many people seem to love to hate the Jews, including many Jews themselves.

Many might defend themselves by claiming that they are not being anti-Semitic, just anti-Israel. They claim that it is Israeli policy towards the Palestinians that compels them to take up the Arab cause. But they do not also feel compelled to learn the truth of the situation that has led Israel to such policies, or what Israel has done to reach a compromise with an uncompromising people. If they did, they would find out that they’re on the wrong side, and this would expose them as the true anti-

Semites they really are.

In fact, no startup people have had a better opportunity to succeed as a nation than the Palestinians. They were given prime real estate for free at the cost of many honest and hard working Israeli families. They were pumped full of enough foreign cash to build up at least *three* countries their size. The world has been begging to be allowed to provide the technical knowhow and equipment to help to make Gaza thrive among the family of nations.

Instead, the place remains a dump and unprofitable. The people are impoverished and stunted. The leaders are multi-billionaires, while the Palestinians remain the destructive terrorists they have always been.

Yet, the world sees none of that, turning a very blind eye to the facts on the ground. They're just too busy examining every last move of the Israelis, who have come by their success honestly, with much hard work, and tremendous bloodshed. Clearly it is not so much that anti-Semites love our enemies as much as they just hate us. Why? Don't they have anything better to do with their minds and emotions?

### **Shabbos Day**

WE COULD ASK the same question about the Egyptians in this week's *parsha*. Thanks to Yosef, they had survived the famine. Years of prosperity and building followed. Had they simply ignored the Jews in their time, Egypt would have done just fine.

We know already from Yosef's time that Egyptians did not like Jews, and found it disgusting to dine with them, even with a Jew as important to Egypt as Yosef. But it is one thing to not want to share a meal with someone you don't like, and something altogether different to treat them like sub-humans. Is it a logical procession, or something beyond human logic?

Judging by the way so many Jews deal with growing anti-Semitism, we'd have to assume that there is some logic to it. Otherwise, why ignore it? Why try to fight it with logic and words if there is nothing logical to fight against? Aside from being a big waste of breath, it would be an even bigger waste of life by staying in harm's way.

Judging by history, we'd have to say that anti-Semitism is not logical or "natural." It has happened when we have fit well into our hosts' societies, and when we have not at all. It has occurred when we have been very similar to our enemies, and very different, whether we were rich and the cause of jealousy, or poor and pitiful. In short, though there are natural laws to explain racism, but there are none that

explain anti-Semitism.

*Rashi* hints to this in this week's *parsha*, in Pharaoh's appeal to his people:

*"Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, in case they increase and war happens to us, and they join our enemies and wage war against us and depart from the land."* (*Shemos* 1:10)

*"And depart from the land. . . Our Rabbis interpreted [i. e., depicted Pharaoh] as a person who curses himself but ascribes his curse to others."* (*Rashi*)

In other words, there was no truth to Pharaoh's fear. There never is. The Jews were doing well in Egypt, grateful for their success, loyal to the government, and had absolutely no plans to fight against Egypt or throw them out. Ditto Germany in the 1930s. Ditto Jews in America today. And yet. . .

There are two ways to look at it. Either anti-Semitism goes away for periods of time, and only reawakens when something historical happens to arouse it, like a tanking economy or similar. Or it is *always* there, and only seems to go away when the perpetrators are temporarily distracted, like because of a booming economy or world destruction.

If Ya'akov *Avinu's* reaction to Lavan's changed demeanor (*Bereishis* 31:2) is meant to teach us anything, it is probably that anti-Semitism belongs to the second category. It is *always* in the world and will be until *Moshiach* comes and the *yetzer bara* goes. All those times when it seems to disappear are the anomalies of history, usually God holding back our enemies so we can do what we're meant to do while living among them.

It's like being born with a dangerous birth defect, *R"L*. A person may live for one year, or for many years, but each year they do live will feel like a gift (as it should for all of us). For such a person, it's never a question of *"Will I die young?"* but of, *"How young?"* For a Jew, it is never a question of, *"Will anti-Semitism return?"* but a question of, *"How soon?"*

Oh, and of, *"Do I know what to do once it does?"*

### **Seudas Shlishis**

THE GEMORA POINTS this out too. Have you ever wondered by Mt. Sinai is called Mt. Sinai? Me neither. The *Gemora* did however (*Shabbos* 89a), but I think it was just looking for a venue to teach something else, the source of anti-Semitism. Sinai, the *Gemora* explains, comes from the word *"sinah,"* which means hatred, because Sinai is the origin of Jew hatred.

The explanation has different layers. Cutting to the chase, the giving and receiving of the Torah cut an eternal deal between God and the Jewish people. Once we “signed” on the dotted line, we accepted upon ourselves a mission that we cannot choose to reject. As the prophet Yeshayahu told the exiles to Babylonia, there is no divorcing God or Torah.

But Torah is not the goal so that we automatically get punished for breaking it. Torah is the means to a more ultimate goal, and breaking it is like spending hard earned money you were saving to buy a house for your family on bets at some Casino. Talk about being your own worst enemy.

Torah and *mitzvos* are like a car meant to take us to our dream destination. Every time you stop and get out you lose precious time that you will have to later make up by speeding and driving more recklessly. Every time the Jewish people get bogged down in the here and now, and forget about the ultimate destination of the world, we have to later make up for it in far less desirable ways.

Even worse, some people just won't get back into the car again. So before we even get an opportunity to make up for lost time, we have to get people back on board. As the *Gemora* says:

“Rebi Yehoshua said to him, *‘If they do not repent they will not be redeemed?!’* Rather, The Holy One, Blessed is He, will cause a king to arise who will make decrees as difficult as Haman's, and Israel will [be forced to] repent and return to the right path.” (*Sanhedrin* 97b)

Anti-Semitism is rising? It is becoming less comfortable to be a Jew in public in the Diaspora? Don't write your congressperson. Don't march down Main Street in protest. That might work if anti-Semitism was only racism. But it's not. It's God's way of telling the Jewish people one thing and one thing only: Exile is ending, redemption is coming. Get ready, or get lost along the way.

### ***Acharis K'Reishis, Part 2***

LAST WEEK'S TRANSLATION explained that redemption of the Jewish people begins with something called *pekidah*, a “remembering.” At some point during an exile, something happens in the direction of redemption, even though it may be small or short-lived, like Koresh (Cyrus) letting the Jews go back to *Eretz Yisroel* after only 52 years of exile to begin construction on the Second Temple.

In recent times, the *pekidah* could easily have been the UN vote in 1948 to officially accept the Jewish people's declaration of statehood, especially given the amazing

Divine Providence that led to it (see my books, especially *Drowning in Pshat* and, *Preparing For Redemption*, available through [ThirtySix.org](http://ThirtySix.org) and *Amazon*). Using this information, the *sefer* continues:

WE CAN UNDERSTAND something else from this regarding many other places that the *Chachamim* elucidate verses, saying that they have to do with the future redemption. [For example,] like [the story] in the *Gemora* at the end of *Maseches Makkos*, where it says Rebi Akiva said:

“This is why I laugh, because it is written, *‘I will take to Me faithful witnesses to attest: Uriah HaKoben, and Zechariah ben Yeverechyabu’* (*Yeshayahu* 8:2). Now, what connection is there between Uriah and Zechariah? Uriah was [prophesying] during the First Temple, and Zechariah was [prophesying] during the Second Temple. Rather, the verse [has] made the prophecy of Zechariah dependent on the prophecy of Uriah. Regarding Uriah it says: *‘Therefore, because of you, Tzion will be plowed as a field, etc.’* (*Michah* 3:12). It says in *Zechariah* (8:4): *‘There will yet be elderly men and elderly women sitting in the streets of Jerusalem.’* Until the prophecy of Uriah was fulfilled I was afraid that the prophecy of Zechariah would not be fulfilled. Now that the prophecy of Uriah has been fulfilled, I know that the prophecy of Zechariah will [also] be fulfilled.” (*Makkos* 24b)

There seems to be a contradiction. It begins by saying that the prophecy of Zechariah was regarding the Second Temple, after they returned from exile in Bavel. If so, why did Rebi Akiva laugh in anticipation of the fulfillment of the prophecy [if at the time] it was [already] after the destruction of the Second Temple? Rather, they had a tradition that the order of the building of the Second Temple will also apply to the [building of the] Third Temple [as well].

For essays on the current situation, go to [www.sbaarnproductions.org](http://www.sbaarnproductions.org).

*Good Shabbos,*  
Pinchas Winston