

Tisha B'Av

by Benjamin Gee - Tuesday, August 06, 2019

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A message for those who attack us...

Why are the enemies of the Jewish people compared to bees?

On Shabbat when we read parashat Devarim it will be erev Tisha B'av. In the parsha, we are told that Moshe reminded the nation of what had transpired in the wilderness - "vayerdifu etchem ka'asher t'assena ha'devorim" - the Amorite nation sought to destroy us and they pursued us just as bees do. So why are the Amorites compared to bees?

Ibn Ezra explains that if the bees within a hive sense that somebody or something is threatening them then they will all go after that person in their thousands. And so too with the phenomenon of antisemitism. Sometimes we find that irrational perception that the Jews pose a threat and as a result we suffer persecution.

Now Rashi takes us one step further. Rashi comments on the fact that after a bee stings - it dies! Similarly, we notice, says Rashi, how the nations who have sought to destroy the Jews, have in turn been destroyed.

This is a particularly apt thought for us to bear in mind as we approach the fast day of Tisha B'av. We will be recalling the manner in which the Babylonians, in the case of the first temple and the Romans in the case of the second temple, sought to destroy our people. We have prevailed while those nations - the mightiest on Earth in their time - have long been forgotten about.

Similarly, as we cast our minds back over the past century we reflect with pain on how the Nazis sought to physically annihilate us, and those in the Soviet Union sought to spiritually destroy our people - yet here we are, we are thriving as a nation, while they have been consigned to the pages of history!

At the time of the commencement of the Jewish people, Hashem, in his first statement to Avraham Avinu said "v'avarecha mevarachecha" - those who bless you will be blessed, "u'mekalelecha a'or" - those who curse you will be cursed. These sentiments are beautifully expressed in our Lecha Dodi prayer which we chant every Friday night. In addressing the city of Jerusalem which is a symbol of the Jewish nation we say "V'hayu lim'shisa shosai'yich" - those who seek to oppress and destroy you shall suffer that fate themselves! "V'rachaku kol m'valai'yich" - and all those who seek to devour you will be kept distant from you.

Despite the evil intentions of some of the mightiest nations on earth in history, to destroy the Jewish people - with the help of Hashem, we have prevailed, while they have faded away. "Yasis alai'yich Elokai'ich" - may Hashem shower joy and happiness upon us so that we will not know oppression, persecution or attempts to annihilate us anymore - a time when, please God, Tisha B'av which is referred

to by our prophets as a festival, will be transformed into the happiest day of the year.

Shabbat Shalom

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