



Baha'alotecha

The Dangers Of A Jewish Antisemite

There is nothing as dangerous to our people as a Jewish antisemite. This is a lesson we have tragically learned throughout our long Jewish history, and it is reflected in the parsha of Beha'alotecha. The Torah tells us:

“וְהָאֶסְפָּסָף אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבּוֹ”
“The mixed multitude within them.”

Whilst we were in the desert, the “mixed multitude” in our midst rebelled. They were pitted against the rest of the nation, and a *them* and *us* culture developed. It was tense, it was tragic, and ultimately caused the loss of life.

Just a few weeks ago, in Parshat Bechukotai, we read these words:

“וְרָדוּ בְּכֶם שְׂנְאֵיכֶם”
“Your enemies among you will rule you.”

The time will come where those who hate you will rule you. The Sifra, which is an anthology of Midrashic texts, isolates the last two words: “בְּכֶם שְׂנְאֵיכֶם” “Your enemies among you.”

What is a great curse for our people?
When those who hate you are found within you.

And indeed the prophet Isaiah said:

“מִהָרְסִיךָ וּמִחֲרִיבֶיךָ מִמֶּךָ יֵצְאוּ”
“Those who destroy you and those who lay you to waste come from within your own ranks.”

When you take an iron rod and you clash it against another iron rod, it makes an enormous noise. But if you take an iron rod and you hit with it a piece of wood, it hardly makes any noise at all.

When *like* clashes with *like*, the impact is enormous, similar to when Jew has been pitted against Jew throughout our history.

But there is a way forward.

At the end of Parshat Beha'alotecha, we're told how Miriam became deathly ill. The entire nation mobilised to care for her, and to pray for her.

Everybody stopped until Miriam would get better. This has been one of the most favourable and impressive features of Jewish life throughout the ages. An entire nation cares about and prays for one single soul.

And we saw it so recently with the Jewish hostages in Gaza, how the entire nation was mobilised to pray for and act for the release of even one person, and even if that person had been killed just to release that body.

That's Judaism at its finest. When we are together, we are strong. And when we are divided, we couldn't be weaker. So therefore, let us learn this lesson from Parshat Beha'alotecha. To always guarantee Jewish unity. And in that way we will move forward as a proud, strong, viable and blessed nation.

Shabbat Shalom.