

A JEW IS A JEW AND THERE IS NO TIME TO WASTE

Beginning with the year 5730, the Rebbe often spoke at farbrengens with great anguish about the fallacy of the Law of Return in Eretz Yisroel which would not qualify that conversion to Yiddishkeit must be according to Halacha. Aside for the actual topic of "Mihu Yehudi" that the Rebbe was addressing, there is a wealth of Torah and hashkafa that the Rebbe introduced to us in the many hundreds of hours he spent talking about this painful subject, which help educate us on the uniqueness of a Jew and the distinction between the Jewish people and all the other nations.

In the following section, we offer you a glimpse into the topic:

STORIES THAT CORRECT PERSPECTIVES

The Rebbe addressed two of the popular arguments commonly made by those against the correction of *Mihu Yehudi*:

1. We should be focused on rebuilding *klal Yisroel* after the

Holocaust, not limiting who can enter.

2. Hashem is the one who set up the divide between Jew and gentile and embedded it in the structural makeup of the world, just like the division between night and day. Why should we expend so much effort in preserving something that has divine backing? Are we afraid that day too, can turn into night?

To counter these claims the Rebbe brings two anecdotes; the *shidduch* of Yitzchok and Rivka, and the incident of Nachum ish Gam Zu and the pauper, demonstrating how each provides an answer to these claims.

THE ELTERE BOCHUR

In the *shidduch* of Yitzchok and Rivka, the question is why this *shidduch* didn't take place sooner. Of course Rivka was only born three years earlier and Avraham waited for

her to be fit to consummate the union. But was she the only girl?

Was "taking a daughter from the Canaanites" such an atrocity that it was worth delaying Yitzchok's *shidduch* until he was 40 years old?

Also, considering the fact that the possible loss of continuity of the Jewish nation at the *akeda* caused Avraham to consider allowing Yitzchok to marry a Canaanite, one would think he would be more forgiving and less selective.

But ultimately, Avraham still stood his ground and directed Eliezer to specifically find a *shidduch* from his family and his father's house, not from Canaan. He was unrelenting, he would not compromise with Yitzchok marrying a Canaanite despite the risk of the discontinuation of his progeny.

The reason for this is because for Avraham this was equivalent to a Jew marrying a gentile for which he had a zero tolerance policy.

As long as Yitzchok was learning Torah, Avraham saw no rush in getting him married. When he finally conceded to the need, he would not compromise on this principle.

The Jewish people as a whole were challenged with the same question in the post-Holocaust era. Some say, six million Jews were killed and now we are faced with the need to rebuild *klal Yisroel*; let's not get stuck on the details, let's take whoever we can as part of the Jewish people.

They use this argument in respect to the "Law of Return." They say, let's incorporate people that although they are not Jewish, or have non-halachic conversions, because they are good people. The response to this is Avraham's precedent; he taught us that the divide between Jew and gentile is divine and thus absolute. It is embedded in creation and is as unchangeable as the divide between night and day.

NACHUM AND THE POOR MAN

That being said, we are now faced with the reverse argument. Why fight to create change when the divide is so stark. Chances are that everything will work out in the end, so we don't need

to be concerned with diplomacy and enact rectification proposals when we are anyways dealing with an issue that is already divinely "covered."

In a more nuanced format, this was where Nachum Ish Gam Zu erred. He was missing both arms and legs and his body was covered in boils. His students challenged him¹, "You are a righteous man, why has this suffering befallen you?"

He replied, "Once I was traveling along the road to my father-in-law's house and I had with me a load distributed among three donkeys; one of food, one of drink, and one of delicacies. A poor person came and stood before me in the road, saying: My rabbi, sustain me. I said to him: Wait until I unload the donkey, after which I will give you something to eat. However, I had not managed to unload the donkey before his soul left his body.

"I went and fell upon his face and said: May my eyes, which had no compassion on your eyes, be blinded; may my hands, which had no compassion on your hands, be amputated; may my legs, which had no compassion on your legs, be amputated. My mind did not rest until

I said: May my whole body be covered in boils."

Nachum Ish Gam Zu prayed that his suffering should atone for his failure.

Although this sounds like exceptional accountability, the Beis Yosef² cites this as the reason for extra caution with *tzedakah* and the need to give it immediately, because any delay can lead to bloodshed, "as in the incident with Nachum Ish Gam Zu."

The same can be said of the "Law of Return," and in a much greater measure. In the case of delaying *tzedakah* there is only a *possibility* for a tragic outcome, whereas in the case of the "Law of Return" we have *already* seen the catastrophic results. To the extent that some still say it is no big deal, the way things are going, in a few years you will not even be able to tell the difference between a Jew and a gentile.

The story of Nachum Ish Gam Zu tells us that we must do all in our power as soon as possible, for every moment lost can lead to irreversible repercussions.³ **T**

1. Taanis 21a.

2. Shulchan Aruch Yoreh De'ah, siman 247:1.

3. Sichas Shabbos Parshas Chayei Sarah 5732.

לע"נ
מרת חנה לאה ע"ה
בת הרה"ת ר' שמעון ע"ה
ברוק

נלב"ע ז' טבת, ה'תשע"א
ת"נצ"ב"ה

נדפס על ידי ולזכות משפחתה שיחיו
משפחת ברוק, באנון, דייטש.
ניו יארק. פלארידא. מאנטאנא. מאנטרעאל.