

Danes, Muslims, and... the Jews?

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By Rabbi Yaakov Paley

There are many people of the Muslim faith who are currently outraged at what they perceive to be an affront to their religion. Riots and violence are taking place across the globe; embassies have been torched, army bases attacked, and an abundance of anti-social behavior exhibited.

Against whom is all this fury directed? Against the editors of the various media outlets who printed twelve questionable cartoons; these papers were printed in European countries, by either Christians or atheists.

Here comes the big question: What on earth does all this have to do with the Jews?

Apparently, the Jews-in-the-news phenomenon is a force of nature... Nothing at all? Then why are Islamic papers retaliating against the "attack" on their religion by proclaiming in a blaze of rage that the theme for their tit-for-tat cartoons will be directed against... the Jews?? Where did we come into the picture?

From the ancient times to the modern, the Jewish people have

always managed to play on the minds of even the most powerful nations. Despite their repeated attempts to make themselves inconspicuous, just begging to live an unobtrusive and peaceful existence, the Jews have always made the headlines. From the Dark Age to the Techno Age, this essential ingredient in our planet's batter simply persists.

We have a word for such a thing. When something consistently reoccurs in our world—whether it is a particular weather pattern, a bottle-nosed dolphin migrating habit, or human behavior—it is termed “nature.” We regard it a natural occurrence, an integral part of the workings of our unfathomable universe. When such a thing fails to happen, it is deemed “unnatural.”

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This has not escaped the attention of the Jewish people themselves, and is often the factor behind unfortunate self-denial, suppression, or surrender. Likewise, it has not escaped the attention of the other nations on this planet, and at fairly regular intervals, it motivates a king or nation to attempt to remove us from “their” world.

But nature being nature, it was designed and is preserved by the Creator, not men. He decided to create a “Chosen Nation,” and likewise arranges matters to keep us on the headlines—for good or for bad.

It is not uncommon for a lighthouse whose light is negligently out, that the very ship it was designed to aid crashes into the lighthouse itself, thus damaging both parties... Why? Because of our essential nature and function. The only reason for bothering to select a particular people—and a small and rebellious one at that—is if they have a purpose to fulfill and a task to accomplish. The Jewish people were tasked with being a lighthouse for the treacherous waters that humanity

constantly flounders in. The nations are meant to persistently gaze in our direction. That's natural.

However, a lighthouse is only useful if the keepers actually maintain the building and keep a steady beacon burning. To that end, G-d gave us the light—His light. We are mere keepers, and dare not claim the light is ours alone.

So, what does the reaction to the Danish anti-Islamic cartoons have to do with Jews?

On the one hand, it is pure and evil anti-Semitism—may G-d return their hatred on their own heads! But at the same time, it is only natural that nations turn to us, whether when creating a religion or when looking for a scapegoat. When the Creator wove the fabric of nature, He designed it so that all eyes face us, regardless of their awareness of this inner reason.

The rest of it is up to us: to guide our neighbors on this planet with the illumination that G-d gave us, to give to them: the seven Noahide laws, as transmitted through the Torah. And it is in the interest of us all—ships and lighthouse alike—that our light should burn steady and sure. It is not uncommon for a lighthouse whose light is negligently out, that the very ship it was designed to aid crashes into the lighthouse itself, thus damaging both parties...

At times, we are like keepers who have forgotten about the beacon atop their tower, and are instead chasing fireflies outside. At such times, we must rediscover the stairwell leading to the top of our lighthouse and the lighthouse master's instructions on how to kindle its light.

Every step in this direction, no matter how seemingly small, prepares our world for the era when no nation will provoke another, for the divine light will shine brightly for all to navigate a calm sea of life with comfort and ease.

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