

From the Diary of Moshe Flinker on Why the Jews are Suffering

Dutch born Moshe Flinker (1926-1944) was from a wealthy, orthodox family. His parents fled with Moshe and his six siblings to Brussels, there they survived most of the war. In his diary, Moshe expresses the pain he feels for the spiritual plight of his brethren.

Moshe and his family were sent to Auschwitz, where he and his parents perished.

(November 30, 1942)

Now I return to the question mentioned above and its solution: what can God mean by all that is befalling us and by not preventing it from happening? This raises a further question, which must be settled before we can proceed further with the main problem. This second question is whether our distress is part of the anguish which has afflicted the Jewish people since the exile, or whether this is different from all that has occurred in the past. I incline to the second answer, for I find it very hard to believe that what we are going through today is only a mere link in a long chain of suffering. I find it difficult to believe this primarily because of the effect that the restrictions and persecutions are having on me, but I know that it is very difficult to base the solution to a problem of such importance solely on personal feelings. Doubtless the Spanish persecutions of the Chmelnicki massacres in 1648, for example, or other periods of anguish also affected our people greatly, as they were happening. Possibly the impression made by those events was even greater than today's events make on me – this may be assumed from the appearance of false messiahs, etc. But personal impressions are not all-important, because there are sometimes events of minor importance whose repercussions are very great, and vice-versa. We should therefore compare our sufferings and theirs in order to find the difference between them.

First of all, we see that in former times the persecutions were always localized. In one place Jews were very badly treated, while in another they

lived in peace and quiet. Secondly, and perhaps more important, is the official character of our oppression today, and the organization created solely to persecute us. This difference is really very obvious. Unlike the Spaniards, for instance, who gave our religion as their reason, the Germans are not even trying to justify their persecutions; it is enough that we are JEWS. The fact that we were born Jews is sufficient to explain and justify everything.

To the first difference, we may add another; that today it is quite possible to destroy the entire people of Israel. The following example may explain this better. In the Middle Ages when an enemy besieged a city, he attacked it with fire and hurled stones into it, and also tried to breach the walls with large and sturdy battering rams. The strongest of the soldiers would grasp the ram and begin smashing at the walls. The people of those time thought that this was the height of strength and power. At the most, when a few dozen more men came to demolish the walls, the enemy reached the limit of its manpower and strength. But today we see that even a small child could destroy a whole city. One only has to connect a bit of dynamite to an electric current, and a mere touch of a finger can destroy the strongest wall in an instant. So it is with respect to our sufferings. In olden days – for example in Crusader times – our ancestors thought that the climax of persecutions had been reached; but today, without swords or weapons, we see persecutions a thousand times more severe. The explanation is that today everything is highly organized.

They arrange and organize and arrange, until perhaps only one in a thousand is able to flee or hide. And why can they now organize everything in a manner that was not previously possible? The reason is, and here we return to our second main difference, that with the Germans everything is official, everything is done according to the law. The law condemns us. Just as there is a law against stealing, so there is a law to persecute the Jews.

So we thus see that there really is a difference between our sufferings since our exile and our anguish in these terrible times. And because of this difference we have reason to ask: Why does the Lord not prevent this, or, on the other hand, why does He permit our tormentors to persecute us? And what can be the result of these persecutions?

The answer to these questions does not seem difficult to me. We know that we were expelled from our country for our great iniquities; therefore, if we wish to return we must first completely repent of our evil ways and then we shall be able to go back to our land. However, the prophet foretold that we would not return because of our righteousness but as a result of the evildoing of our enemies and of our agony at their hands (such as happened in Egypt). It would have sufficed had God let us suffer the simple miseries we have borne until now. There is, however, one further difficulty, namely that even if we already deserve to be redeemed because of our great sufferings, there is the danger that the Jews themselves will not want to be redeemed. I have often asked my Jewish acquaintances what they think the state of affairs will be after the war, and I have always received the same answer – that everything will be as it was; we shall continue to stay where we now live and life will go on as before. But this is not God's will, and He has therefore removed the Jews from the houses and cities where they lived, and now they all wholeheartedly desire to return to our Holy Land, the Land of Israel.

Source: *Young Moshe's Diary*, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem 1971, pp. 26- 29.