

The Millie Arbesfeld
Midreshet Yom Rishon

Sunday Morning Learning Program for Women

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Jewish Attitudes
Towards
Vengeance:

יז בְּנֶפֶל אוֹיֵבֶיךָ (אוֹיֵבֶיךָ), אֶל-תִּשְׁמָח; וּבְכַשְׁלוֹ, אֶל-יִגַּל לְבָבְךָ.
יח פֶּן-יִרְאֶה ה', וְרַע בְּעֵינָיו; וְהֵשִׁיב מֵעַלְיוֹ אִפּוֹ.
(Proverbs 24)



Mrs. Elana Stein Hain
טז' שבט תשס"ט • February 8, 2009

1. מגילה טז.

אמר ליה סק ורכב אמר ליה לא יכלנא דכחישא חילאי מימי תעניתא גחין וסליק כי סליק בעט ביה אמר ליה לא כתיב לכו בנפל אויבך אל תשמח אמר ליה הני מילי בישראל אבל בדידכו כתיב (דברים לג) ואתה על במותימו תדרוך

Haman said to him (Mordechai): Get up and ride. Mordechai said to him: I cannot, for I am weakened from days of fasting. Haman bent down, and Mordechai went up. As Mordechai mounted the horse, he kicked Haman. Haman said to him: Does it not say in your Scriptures, 'When your enemy falls, do not rejoice?' Mordechai responded: This refers to Israel, but regarding you it says, 'And you shall trample on their high places.'

2. ספר שבולי הלקט ענין ראש חודש סימן קעד (מובא גם בב"י)

All seven days of Sukkot we recite full Hallel, but on Pesach we only recite full Hallel on the first day/night. And why is this so? Shmuel b. Abba said, 'When your enemy falls, do not rejoice,' for the Egyptians drowned.

3. סנהדרין לט:

באותה שעה בקשו מלאכי השרת לומר שירה לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא, אמר להן הקדוש ברוך הוא: מעשה ידי טובעין בים ואתם אומרים שירה לפני?

At that moment the ministering angels requested to recite a song before God. God said to them: My handiwork is drowning at sea, and you are reciting song before ME?

4. רלב"ג משלי כד:

פן יראה ה' - רוע תכונתך בזה הענין וישיב מעל אויבך אפו וישיבהו עליך מפני רוע תכונתך כי אין ראוי שישמח ברע כי השם יתברך הרחיק מציאותו לפי מה שאפשר ומה שיגיע יגיע במקרה

Lest God will see – your bad character in this regard, and God will return His anger from upon your enemies and visit it upon you due to your poor character, for it is inappropriate that one rejoice in evil, for God distances His own existence to whatever degree is possible, and that which happens does so at random.

5. אבות ד:יט

שמואל הקטן אומר (משלי כד) 'בנפול אויבך אל תשמח ובכשלו אל יגל לבך פן יראה ה' ורע בעיניו והשיב מעליו אפו.'

Shmuel haKatan says, 'When your enemy falls, do not rejoice...'

6. ברכות כח:

תנו רבנן: שמעון הפקולי הסדיר שמונה עשרה ברכות לפני רבן גמליאל על הסדר ביבנה. אמר להם רבן גמליאל לחכמים: כלום יש אדם שיודע לתקן ברכת המינים? עמד שמואל הקטן ותקנה.

The rabbis taught: Shimon haPekuli organized 18 brachot before R. Gamliel at Yavneh. R. Gamliel said to the sages: Is there no one who can formulate a bracha against the sectarians? Shmuel haKatan stood and instituted it.

7. שו"ת יביע אומר חלק ו - או"ח סימן מא ד"ה (ו) ולכאורה

(In response to the question of reciting Hallel on Yom haAtzmaut)

And see the words of the Chida (R. Chaim Yosef David Azulai, b. 1724)...who wrote, that which we say, 'My handiwork is drowning at sea, and you recite praise?!' only refers to the moment of anger, at the very time of the judgment/destruction, but once the judgment has been meted out, and the miracle has been revealed, it is permissible to sing.

8. שמות פרק י"ד:ל-ט"ו:א

ל וְיִוָּשַׁע ה' בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא, אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל--מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם; וַיֵּרָא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-מִצְרַיִם, מֵת עַל-שַׁפְּת הַיָּם.
 לֹא וַיֵּרָא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-הַיָּד הַגְּדֹלָה, אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה ה' בְּמִצְרַיִם, וַיֵּרָאוּ הָעָם, אֶת ה'; וַיֹּאמְרוּ, בְּה' וּבַמָּשָׁה עָבְדוּ.
 א אֲזַי יִשִּׁיר-מִשָּׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת, לֵה', וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְאֹמְרֵי: אֲשִׁירָה לֵה' כִּי-גָאָה גָּאָה, סוּס וּרְכָבוֹ רָמָה בָּיָם

9. Professor Yisrael Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, 94

We have...two positions, the former what I shall call “vengeful redemption,” and the latter “proselytizing redemption.” The former is expressed in an Ashkenazic source, the latter in a Provencal-Spanish one...Was the messianic world of Ashkenazic Jewry characterized by anticipation of total vengeance against the Gentiles? I would maintain that this was in fact the case, although here and there we find Ashkenazim speaking more moderately, integrating into their thought the notion of proselytizing redemption.

This [final] Redemption...will involve the ruin, destruction, killing and eradication of all the nations: they, and the angels who watch over them from above, and their gods...The Holy One blessed be He will destroy all nations except Israel. (Sefer Nizzahon Vetus, 13th c. Germany)

At the End there will be great signs and wonders that He will do with us, lifting us up, so that all the nations will turn to our faith and declare that what they inherited from their fathers was a lie...For all the peoples will turn to the faith of the honored God through the many wonders they will see when the Lord will deliver us from this Exile. (Milhemet Mitzvah, 13th c. Provence)

A Modern Approach

And now, 60 years later, you who represent the entire world community, listen to the words of the witness. Like Jeremiah and Job, we could have cried and cursed the days dominated by injustice and violence. We could have chosen vengeance. We did not. We could have chosen hate. We did not. Hatred is degrading and vengeance demeaning. They are diseases. Their history is dominated by death.

(Elie Wiesel at the United Nations, 1/24/05, 60 year anniversary of the liberation)