

And it will forsake Me and annul My covenant that I have sealed with it (31:16).

From their nascency as the “spiritual” heirs to the European and Russian *Haskalah*, Enlightenment movement, the secular Zionists who undermined the Orthodox *Yishuv haYashan*, Old *Yishuv* (settlement in Yerushalayim), continue to lay the blame for every one of our People’s troubles at the doorstep of the Orthodox, Torah-observant Jew. Founded upon misguided principles, and nurtured in hypocrisy and avarice, this movement is Jewish only in name. Insidiously, it has attempted to subvert every achievement of the Orthodox – accomplishments that were gained with blood, sweat and tears. They too sacrificed, but for personal ideals, not Torah values. Nonetheless, the blame game has been their declaration of absolution. Whatever has gone wrong throughout history has always been the fault of the Torah- observant camp. If the secular Zionists were to have their way, the Jewish People would be riding high, feared and respected by the whole world.

I write this as a sequel to the following vignette – not as a rebuttal to their claim, because their claims are so ludicrous and unfounded that they do not warrant any response. The *Klausenberger Rebbe, zl*, was once visited in Natanya by then Prime Minister Levi Eshkol. During the conversation, Eshkol bared his feelings, employing one of the most inane critiques against the Orthodox, one that has been used over and over: “The *Admorim* (*Chassidic Rebbes*/and *Rabbanim*) are guilty for the deaths (during the Holocaust) of many of Europe’s Jews.” This was a reference to the fact that many Jews who asked their spiritual leaders if they should leave Europe were told that it was better to remain together and either live or die as observant Jews. Their fear of the unknown, of the rampant assimilation that has destroyed (and continues to destroy) the Jewish lives and pedigree of a large portion of our People, was the overriding reality which guided their decisions. Nonetheless, they were once again coming at us with the blame game.

The *Klausenberger Rebbe* feared no man. He asked Eshkol, who, prior to becoming Prime Minister was Finance Minister, “Tell me, if a man gives over his business or finances to an agent to manage for him, how does he ensure that everything is being run properly? From time to time he makes an audit, goes over the books, checks the profits and losses.

“Let us check the audit of our nation. For thousands of years, the nation’s affairs were conducted under the able guidance of our *gedolei Yisrael*, Torah leaders. The last century – one hundred years – brought about a change in which you eschewed the counsel of the *gedolim* and replaced it with your own theory and logic. One hundred years is sufficient time after which an audit is appropriate. Let us tally what took place these last one hundred years under your watch.

“Six million Jews were brutally murdered by the Nazis. Stalin murdered three million Jews in Russia. Assimilation in America, Great Britain and France claimed six million Jews. I am not counting the rest of the western countries. Every day, three million Jews in the Holy Land are in spiritual endangerment. All of this occurred during your tenure as leaders. So, tell me, who should

really carry the onus of guilt for the last century?"

Levi Eshkol shook his head in apparent defeat. The subject was closed.

In another vignette, the *Klausenberger* was part of a work detail in a rock quarry. The Nazis felt that backbreaking labor under the most inhumane conditions would break even this staunch, resolute believer. They were wrong. The detail was forced to carry large boulders up and down a hill. During one of the work periods, the workers became soaked when a torrential downpour came down on them, also soaking the ground and rendering it like soft clay. The Nazi commander had no mercy as he made them carry the boulders, even as they slipped on the soaked earth. It was at that moment that another Jewish inmate, from a secular background, turned to the *Rebbe* and asked, "Can you still say *Asher bachar banu mikol ha'amim*, 'Who chose us from amongst the other nations'? Are you still happy to be part of the Chosen People, the treasured nation?"

"More so now than before, I can recite those words with even greater devotion. Now when I say these holy words, I will think of the Nazi fiends and be filled with increased joy that I am not like them," declared the *Rebbe*.

The other inmate looked at the *Rebbe* incredulously. The *Rebbe* continued, "I understand that had Hashem not chosen us to be His People, we could revert to becoming as base and as reprehensible as these Nazis. It is far better for me to be an inmate suffering abuse, torture and agony than to be one of them. I would rather be among the victims than one of the murderers!"

There is no grey area. One is either part of the *Am ha'Nivchar*, or he has the sad potential of plummeting to the nadir of depravity, to the lowest of low.