

Antisemitism at the Zoo

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Toras Avigdor Junior

Adapted from the teachings
of Rav Avigdor Miller zt"l

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Israel Hans Wertful looked up hopefully at the sound of the door to his shop opening.

"What's wrong?" asked his wife, as she entered with their two children. "Aren't you happy to see me?"

"No, I am, Sara Gretel," answered Israel Hans. "It's just that I was hoping that maybe it was a customer."

"Has anyone come in today?" Sara Gretel asked.

"Just someone asking for tzedakah. I didn't have a single Reichspfennig to give him." Israel Hans looked around his shop sadly. "If this Nazi boycott of Jewish businesses continues, I may have to give up the store."

"I'm so sorry to hear that," said Sara Gretel gently. "I'll tell you what. Why don't you come with us to the zoo? Admission is free today and they are having special animal shows in honor of Erster Mai (the "May Day" celebration)."

Israel Hans took another sad look around his empty store and then at the ragged faces of his children, Aaron Arnold and Hannah Hilda.

"Okay," he said. "It doesn't look like any customers are coming anyway."



Israel Hans locked up the shop and headed down the street with his wife and children. Hannah Hilda skipped along happily as Sara Gretel carried young Aaron Arnold in her arms.

A few minutes later, they arrived at the entrance to the zoo. A young blonde-haired man was standing outside, asking visitors for identification.

“Israel Hans? Sara Gretel?” he said, looking at the ID cards. “I’m sorry, I cannot allow you inside.”

“Excuse me?” asked Israel Hans. “You’re not letting us in because of our names?”

Another man approached. “Is there a problem here?” he asked.

“Yes, Herr director. Israel Hans and Sara Gretel don’t understand why we won’t allow them into the zoo.”

The director grinned broadly. “Ah, I see. Well that is very easy to explain. You see, you are clearly Jewish people. And today is a national holiday. We don’t want any filthy foreigners like yourselves soiling a beautiful German celebration.”

“Soil?” asked Sara Gretel. “We are very clean people. We just want to see the animals.”

The director’s smile disappeared. “**ENOUGH!**” He shouted. “Get your dirty Jewish faces out of my sight before I call the Gestapo!”

“Papa, what’s the Gestapo?” asked Hannah Hilda, as the Wertful family hurried down the street away from the zoo entrance.

“It’s the new Nazi secret police force that was created last week,” answered Israel Hans. “We’d best hurry home.”

“I don’t understand,” said Sara Gretel as they approached their small apartment. “We have always been so friendly to our German neighbors. Why are they suddenly being so mean to us?”

Entering their home, Israel Hans stopped and looked at the portrait of his father, Reb Herschel Wertful, hanging in the living room.

“Is everything okay, Papa?” Hannah Hilda asked in a worried voice, as a tear rolled down Israel Hans’s cheek.

“Opa was right,” Israel Hans said, pointing at his father’s picture.

“What do you mean?” asked Sara Gretel.

“Every year, on Shabbos Parshas Chukas, my father would talk about how, on the way to Eretz Yisroel, the Bnei Yisroel asked Edom if they could pass through their land. But Edom refused and instead sent their entire army to greet the Yidden, who then had no choice but to turn around and take a different route.

“My father would always say that Hashem did a big favor for Klal Yisroel at that moment. By Edom being ‘mean’ and not letting us through their land, we were prevented from chas veshalom becoming too friendly with the goyim and straying from the Torah.

“My father would warn us to never get too close to our goyishe neighbors, not to try to be like them. But I was young and didn’t listen. I started going by ‘Hans’ so the Germans would want to do business with me. We would celebrate the national holidays with our neighbors so they would want to be friendly with us.

“But now, look what is happening. Hitler decreed that Germans are not allowed to shop at Jewish stores. They force us to use our Jewish names. And now they won’t let us into the zoo on their holiday.”

“I know, it is so sad,” said Sara Gretel.

“No!” said Israel Hans. “Hashem is giving us a message and we must listen before it is too late! Hashem is telling us to stop trying to be like the goyim! From now on I want you to call me Yisroel. No more Hans! We must tell everyone we know that we need to return to the purity of Yiddishkeit. If the Jews of Germany can learn the lesson and stay separate from the ways of the goyim, perhaps we can return to the peace we once enjoyed and avoid any further gezeiros.”

Have a Wonderful Shabbos

let’s review:

- Why weren’t the Wertfuls allowed into the zoo?
- How can this be viewed as a positive thing?



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