

The Root Cause

Rabbi Pinchos Lipschutz

We have been living in turbulent times for a while, and this week, they got even more turbulent. Just a week after one party's presidential candidate was almost assassinated, the incumbent president, who was chosen in democratic primaries, dropped out of the race.

Unlike the assassination attempt, Joe Biden's dropping out did not come as a complete surprise. Ever since his first presidential campaign, it has been obvious to observers that he was not up to the job. Yet, the Democrats and the media coalesced behind him and pushed him over the election hump. They stood steadfastly behind him for four years, propping him up as a strong, resolute leader, even as it was evident that he was not one.

But then they had to look out of their bubble and recognize that electoral polls all pointed to a devastating electoral loss for the Democrat Party in the races for the White House, Senate, and Congress. They searched for a way to undo the primaries, in which they removed all of Biden's serious opposition to ensure he would win. Then Biden handed them the excuse on a golden platter when his advanced senility was on display for all to see. Calls for him to drop out began following the debate in which he demonstrated that he is not capable of winning a campaign, much as he was judged unable to face trial for document crimes.

As Donald Trump's numbers rose in the polls, the party that declared that their presidential campaign was a fight for democracy began pressuring Biden to quit the campaign. Donald Trump was heading to a landslide, and they weren't going to sit back and allow that to happen. Biden, however, let it be known that he would not drop out and began increasing his public appearances, he said that he was chosen by the people to run as their candidate and would fulfill that mandate.

A campaign of organized leaks was launched by party leaders Nancy Pelosi, Chuck Schumer and others, stabbing their supposed friend in the front and in the back as soon as it became expedient. Reportedly, Kamala Harris worked with them to orchestrate Biden's ouster. The money dried up, as financial supporters who were bankrolling Biden decided, all at once, that he couldn't win, stating that they were not going to be writing any more checks to his campaign. What began as a drip-drip campaign to dump Biden, organized by party bosses working behind dark curtains as puppeteers, snowballed and reached a crescendo as the uber-effective Republican convention closed.

Some refer to what happened as a coup. Others see it as a pragmatic move by politicians who are only loyal to people who can benefit them. In his diminished state, Biden became not only expendable, but someone who had to be pushed out of the way if the Democrats would have a chance to maintain power.

It is noteworthy that the president made the announcement to close out his five-decade political career on X. Though the world has vastly changed, it is startling that such a monumental

decision by the leader of the world's greatest democracy was announced without facing anyone and not in an address to the nation in which he would have explained what he was doing and why. As ignominious a departure as could be.

The way his announcement was made contributed to the perception that he is not well enough or in a proper frame of mind to remain as president.

There are multiple trouble zones across the world, and transitions are always dangerous times. As the world sees their suspicions of Biden's well-being confirmed, the country's enemies may use this in-between period to attempt to realize wicked ambitions. Leaving the country in the hands of a confirmed feeble leader is inviting trouble.

History is being made weekly, and nobody knows where all this will lead. Just a couple of days ago, the country was praising the Republicans for their successful convention, and the entire focus was on them, while Biden was hunkered down in Delaware, said to be recuperating from Covid. And then, after telling everyone that he would not drop out of the race, a letter was posted in his name stating that he was doing just that.

Once again, it is an eis tzorah l'Yaakov.

Israel is under attack as it continues its war against Iran's proxies in Gaza, Lebanon, and Yemen. Prime Minister Binyomin Netanyahu is embattled not only by forces of the Left, but by others who think that bringing him down would help them in some way. The Israeli Deep State is ratcheting up its war against the yeshivos and kollelim, sending out draft notices this week to yeshiva students.

Leftist Democrats and the media were rapidly to coalescing to enthusiastically support Vice President Kamala Harris and do everything necessary to get her over the finish line, despite her proclivity for making statements that don't make any sense and portraying an unwise personage who giggles a lot. The same power brokers who put in Biden despite his obvious incompetence are now working to put in Harris despite her obvious incompetence and her complicity in hiding the president's condition from the American people. Though polls have shown that voters do not believe she is ready to be president, she is in a position to be handed the mantle.

Within 24 hours from when the letter with Biden's signature was posted, \$81 million came gushing in to the Harris for President campaign, a majority of the delegates committed to vote for her nomination at the convention and almost every Democrat official in the country endorsed her nomination. The media's finely honed barrage was unleashed, and with the snap of a finger, speeches were loaded in Kamala's teleprompter and she was out on the campaign trail running for president. Such things don't usually happen overnight, but they did and all the while Biden remained hidden in Delaware.

Harris was in charge of the border, and we all know how that worked out. She is a strong supporter of the Palestinian side and has not been an advocate for Israel. In fact, she has been

very critical of the Jewish state. She is in the camp of the anti-Semitic progressives and will likely cut deals with them for their support, just as Joe Biden did. Her priorities will likely not be in line with ours.

Then again, the Democrat bosses pushed out Biden because of his low polling. Harris doesn't poll much better than Biden. If that remains the case with Biden out of the race, voices will begin emerging for other candidates. Unlikely, but possible.

All of this is not good for Jews and for Israel. Chaos never is.

It is at times like these that we remember that we are in golus. During the Trump years, as Israel got everything it needed from him, and the economy hummed along, unemployment was low, inflation was lower, there were no wars, and anti-Semitism was in check, it was easy to forget that we are in golus.

Ever since the end of the Yom Tov of Sukkos, we have been repeatedly reminded that wherever we are, we are in golus, and the good times we have become accustomed to are in abeyance.

As the Three Weeks are ushered in, we read Parshas Pinchos, which highlights the role played by Pinchos, who personified the strength that was essential in saving Klal Yisroel from destruction. There was a crisis, everyone was overcome by fear, and one man emerged and, with a potent inner strength, did what had to be done.

Because of the strength of Pinchos, Klal Yisroel was saved from being wiped out in a plague. Pinchos was the only one bothered enough by the sacrilege to approach Moshe to discuss how to respond. He earned the right to react.

When action is called for, there are always valid excuses not to get involved. Great people look beyond the justifications for inaction and alter the face of history. In our private lives, we should resist the temptation to seek excuses for lethargy and indecisiveness.

The lesson taught by Pinchos is most significant at this time of year, as it reminds us that everyone has the ability to make a difference and be a catalyst for the geulah.

During this period, when we concentrate on mourning the loss of the Bais Hamikdosh, we should ponder the idea that Rav Yaakov Emden develops in his peirush on siddur that the length of our golus might be a result of not sufficiently mourning the churban. He decries the lack of passion, tears, and mourning. He writes that during this period, we engage in customs related to aveilus, but we don't give them much thought and don't even know what it is that we are mourning.

While during the current period we engage in acts of mourning to commemorate the loss of the Bais Hamikdosh, all throughout the year, at weddings, the chosson breaks a glass while he stands under the chupah next to his kallah. In every Jewish home, there is a blank area,

marking a memorial to the Bais Hamikdosh, reminding us of the emptiness we should fill in our lives.

Two thousand years ago, the Bais Hamikdosh was destroyed. We lost our homes, our country, and our families. We were sold into slavery, became refugees, and have been trudging from place to place ever since like a group of homeless people. Sometimes they sleep on the street, and sometimes they end up in an all-expenses-paid luxury hotel. We have had all types of hosts. Some were kind to us, and others burned us alive or gassed us in ovens.

Yet, said the Alter of Kelm, when we go through the three-week mourning period and recite Selichos on Shivah Asar B'Tammuz and Kinnos on Tisha B'Av, we lose sight of what it is that we are grieving. He says that when we cry over tragedies depicted in the lamentations we recite, we are portraying superficiality. He explains that it is like someone who cries when hearing an allegorical story that never happened. It is a demonstration of emotion over intelligence.

In fact, the purpose of remembering the tragedies that befell our people is to realize the power of the aveirah of sinas chinom, which caused the destruction of the Bais Hamikdosh. The ensuing tragedies over the years ever since are an outgrowth of that original sin.

The reason we engage in acts of mourning during this period is to remind us that it is because of our sinas chinom that the tragedies have not come to an end and the Bais Hamikdosh has not been rebuilt.

We have groups and organizations to strengthen observance of so many mitzvos, and they are all to be commended, but the sin that caused all the messes we find ourselves in today and all the terrible tragedies that befell our people over the past two thousand years has aroused few people to work to remedy what lies at the root of our problems.

We need a Pinchos to rise from among the people and educate them on sinas chinom in a way that they can understand and accept. We can be proficient in the observance of every mitzvah, dedicated to Torah, tzedakah, and chesed, yet we will not merit the rebuilding of the Bais Hamikdosh until we eradicate the hatred Jews have for each other. Someone has to teach us that we can disagree without hating the person and people who believe and conduct themselves differently than we do.

Klal Yisroel was comprised of twelve shevotim, each with its own legitimate traditions and paths in Torah. As the Holocaust approached and yeshivos searched for places of refuge, the rabbon shel kol bnei hagolah, Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzensky, was their patron. He invited all the yeshivos to come to Vilna, where he found places for them to learn and sleep, and raised money for their food and sustenance.

As the winds of war were blowing and Jews were fearful of their next move, their incomes suffered. It became difficult for the ailing elderly rov to raise the funds necessary for the many yeshivos and their refugee students and staffs. Philanthropists and charitable organizations to

whom he turned suggested that the yeshivos be consolidated to conserve dwindling finances. They saw no reason why the various yeshivos could not join together.

Rav Chaim Ozer refused and explained to them that each yeshiva is like a shevet. Each one has its own derech and path in Torah. He would not combine the various Chassidishe and Litvishe yeshivos he provided for. Each needed its own place and space.

Rav Chaim Ozer was referred to as the father of the yeshivos and Torah Jewry. He respected and cared for each person and each legitimate group, as disparate as they were, as long as they were loyal to Torah and halacha.

In our day, as well, we need to learn to respect each other, even if we look and act differently. There are so many who are suffering. There is much that is lacking in our world, and everything emanates from the same root cause: sinas chinom.

As we worry about the future of this democracy and the future of our brethren in Eretz Yisroel, as we seek to alleviate the Israeli situation, and as we search for answers to the many issues that arise among us, we need to know that the solution to all the problems is the same. We need to stop disrespecting each other. We need to pump up the love and view everyone as brothers and sisters.

We can each be like Pinchos, a beacon of strength in a world of chaos, fearlessly attacking our problem and doing what we can to ensure that this will be the last Three Weeks that we experience. Next year, they will be weeks of joy and celebration, as we recall the past years, when they were a time of sadness and grief.

Who wouldn't rather celebrate than mourn?

Let's all join the campaign to "Stop Sinas Chinom Now."

We can do it! It's about time!