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Parashah Chaye Sarah 25 Marcheshvan 5783 – November 19, 2022

There is much that has happened concerning anti-semitism in the recent past. First, there was Kanye, then Kyrie Irving, and then Dave Chappelle. Each of them has their reasons for the way they feel, and behave, just as Mel Gibson, years ago, had his reasons for anti-semitic tirades. Each of these people truly knows what is in their hearts.

My question is this; what if a Jew were to do the same things? The castigation of a Jewish person is extremely serious and public. Donald Sterling, the past owner of the Los Angeles Clippers, was banned for life from the National Basketball Association and fined \$2.5 million following alleged racist comments he made over the phone to his ex-girlfriend. While it is true that Donald Sterling was wrong, comparatively his punishment (from a private conversation) far exceeded the indiscretion.

Kanye lost endorsements and some money, and Kyrie Irving apologized after he was suspended without pay. Dave Chappelle was given a pass because he is a “shock comedian”, and Mel Gibson is worth \$450 million with no remorse, moving forward.

“Political Correctness” doesn’t apply to Jews is the message I’m hearing. Dave Chappelle’s monologue may have been funny, and Judaism is a fan of humor. We learn as Rabbis to use humor before learning in earnest. Humor relaxes us; however, hurtful language is a powerful tool and scars the soul. The Gemara may even consider it akin to murder.

Avraham buys property from the sons of Chet to bury his beloved Sarah. B’nei Chet (the sons of Chet) are mentioned in the Torah ten times. They are mentioned for no good reason at first glance. B’nei Chet are idolaters who are greedy and selfish, so why were they mentioned ten times? These ten times correspond to the Ten Commandments which teach us that anyone who helps a righteous person in a business venture is as if they fulfilled the Ten Commandments.

The anti-semitic remarks by Kanye, Kyrie Irving, and Dave Chappelle may have taught us something. They taught us to open our eyes. One deed, one achievement, at the right time and place, can impact many people. Apology and sensitivity training and education are all good things. It is an action that they need to engage in. They are, for all intent and purpose, B’nei Chet. They have an opportunity now to help the righteous and positively change their lives and the lives of others.

Good Shabbos!

Shabbat Shalom!

Rabbi Nathan W. Langer

