

A Wake-Up Call from Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis

Sara Yoheved Rigler

Esther Jungreis was eight years old when, as an inmate of the Bergen Belsen concentration camp, starved and humiliated, she would hear the daily shouts of the Nazi officers: "Line up, you pig-dogs!"

And, as she obeyed their commands, little Esther would think: "I'm glad I'm a daughter of the people who stood at Sinai and sealed a Covenant with G-d to be his eternal people and live by his Torah. I'm glad I'm not a daughter of this nation of brutes."

This summer, Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis, one of the most charismatic speakers in the Jewish world, did a speaking tour of Europe. "I'm sorry to tell you," she declared recently in a Jerusalem interview, "that the atmosphere in Europe today is just like it was in 1938. In every country I went to, Jews told me that they are afraid, that they are experiencing virulent anti-Semitism."

Her words are underscored by recent judicial verdicts in France of the Muslim thugs who tortured Ilan Halimi to death because, in the words of the gang leader, "he was Jewish." Most of the co-defendants got off with such light sentences that France's Minister of Justice was embarrassed into calling a retrial. But perhaps even more ominous was the audacious statement of the French prosecutor, who accused the defendants of turning "normal anti-Semitism into hateful anti-Semitism." What, indeed, defines the line between "normal" (therefore acceptable) anti-Semitism and the "hateful" variety? Had his Muslim attackers killed Ilan without torturing him for 24 days, would that have been acceptable in 21st century France?

"Europe is becoming Eurabia," Rebbetzin Jungreis avows. "The continent is being dominated by radical Muslims who are vehemently anti-Israel and anti-Israel means anti-Jewish. It's politically correct today to be anti-Israel or anti-Zionist, rather than anti-Semitic."

The word afraid cannot be applied to this petite powerhouse of a woman, who at age 73 can speak on four different continents in a week and whose teaching, writing and counseling schedule, on less than three hours of sleep a night, would wear out a person half her age. Yet, as a Holocaust survivor, Rebbetzin Jungreis is clearly troubled by a sense of déjà-vu as she regards a world silent in the face of rising anti-Semitism.

Before and during the Holocaust, there was not one nation who spoke up for us. And today there is not one nation speaking up for us. The whole world is negotiating with despicable dictators. The more vicious the Muslim nations become, the more olive branches are thrown at their feet, and the more pressure is placed upon Israel, the only democracy in the Middle East. This pressure emanates not only from traditional anti-Semitic sources, but from our American government as well. The concessions that Washington demands of Israel are unacceptable. And yet, very few seem to care. Additionally, the administration has given the green light to Iran's nuclear power pro-



gram, provided, of course, it is used only for peaceful purposes! If it weren't so tragic, it would be laughable. Don't they realize that we—nay, the entire world, heard Ahmadinejad openly proclaim his intention to wipe Israel off the map?

Rebbetzin Jungreis cites Ahmadinejad's September, 2008, speech to the United Nations General Assembly, in which he proclaimed: "The dignity, integrity and rights of the American and European people are being played with by a small but deceitful number of people called Zionists. Although they are a miniscule minority, they have been dominating an important portion of the financial and monetary centers as well as the political decision-making centers of some European countries and the US in a

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deceitful, complex and furtive manner. This means that the great people of America and various nations of Europe need to obey the demands and wishes of a small number of invasive people. These nations are spending their dignity and resources on the crimes and occupations and the threats of the Zionist network against their will."

Although the Iranian dictator's words differed from Hitler's only by replacing the title "Juden" with "Zionists," not one member nation of the UN (except Israel) walked out on Ahmadinejad's speech. In fact, points out Rebbetzin Jungreis, Columbia University invited him to speak. "Can you imagine inviting Hitler to speak at Columbia University?" she asks ruefully.

The night following his UN invective, Ahmadinejad appeared on *Larry King Live*. Rather than challenging Ahmadinejad's accusations, Larry King (himself a Jew) amiably asked his guest, "How old are you? You look so young, but you already have married children." Rebbetzin Jungreis, her voice soft but her eyes flashing fire, declares: "I would have asked him some very different questions."

Rebbetzin Jungreis' Solution

Rebbetzin Jungreis says, "When I speak on college campuses, I give out my books gratis, and I inscribe each book to the recipient. I ask each student his or her Jewish name. Most of them reply, 'I don't know.' I tell them to find out and if they don't have one, I tell them to go to their rabbi and ask for a Jewish name, or I give them one. Because your Jewish name is not simply a name. Your Jewish name is your roots, your heritage, your identity. Through your Jewish name you are linked to your life's mission."

A few years ago, she was invited to meet with ministers of the Hungarian parliament. One of the ministers asked her: "Are you angry? During the Holocaust, this same Hungarian parliament passed all those anti-Semitic laws."

The Rebbetzin replied: "We are not a nation that indulges in anger. But let me tell you a story. My ancestors in ancient Egypt suffered slavery and degradation. If you had asked who had the greater chance of surviving the millennia, the Israelite slaves or the Egyptian empire, everyone would have laughed at you. But all that is left of

the Egyptian empire is relics in the British Museum, and we, the Jewish people, are still here. And this holds true for all the mighty empires of the world, from the Babylonians to the Romans. The great Roman Empire killed hundreds of thousands of Jews. Emperor Titus built a victory arch in Rome to commemorate the conquest of the Jews. I moved through the Arch of Titus going from Hitler's concentration camps on our way to freedom. Hitler claimed to give the world 'the final solution.' He even built a museum in Prague to exhibit the artifacts of the extinct Jewish people. But his 'thousand-year Reich' survived 12 years, and we Jews are still here."

Jewish survival, explains Rebbetzin Jungreis, is G-d's part of the Covenant. Our part is to keep the Torah's commandments.

Rebbetzin Jungreis ends on a powerful note:

"Hitler needed ghettos. I know. I was in one. Hitler needed cattle cars. I know. I was in one. Hitler needed concentration camps. I know. I was in one. Hitler needed gas chambers. I know. I was in one, although that time it sprayed water instead of gas. Ahmadinejad doesn't need ghettos, nor cattle cars, nor concentration camps, nor gas chambers. He can accomplish the same thing just by pressing a button. Heaven forbid!"

What will you do to stop him?□

Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis is the founder and president of Hineni, and author of four best-selling books. Sara Yoheved Rigler is the author of the new Battle Plans: How to Fight the Yetzer Hara (with Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller). She is a graduate of Brandeis University. She is a popular international lecturer on subjects of Jewish spirituality and also presents two highly-acclaimed workshops for women. This article originally appeared on Aish.com and was edited to fit this space.

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