
ERUCH GETS A THRASHING

Eruch Jessawala

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13:57

ERUCH: But, I cannot just end the story—this episode of my life, without telling you something of His compassion. Being in a Catholic school, it was a very prestigious school. Only selected non-Catholics were allowed the entrance. A missionary school. Fathers from Italy and France, and Germany were there to teach us. Brothers were there. So when I was admitted there, they were all the time, those other students would—there would be that hazing going on, you know how it is. When you are newcomers and all that. I didn't know a word of English at that time because I was a boarder, learning vernacular.

So, from that time, they would tease me and other non-Catholics as heathens. So we were heathens, and they were Roman Catholics. So there were two parties there, and we were at loggerheads. Even though we were children. Because they would call out, "Ay heathen!", and we didn't like that. First of all, we didn't know what it meant. Then we learnt the meaning and when we learnt the meaning, well it was very obnoxious, you see. That's how it was.

So, and moreover when I was promoted to higher and higher standards, from little, primary, to now secondary classes. So we were told, the non-Catholics were told, few were there, about half a dozen were there in our class, to sit at the back of the class, because the Roman Catholics should come in the front, because these are catechism classes. Spiritual classes for the

New Testament, the Old Testament and all that. So you all sit there and don't disturb. Do your homework there. So we being children, how can we sit quietly when there is a class going on there? We can't just put our heads and read anything, you'd watch and fidgety. So time and again we would just try to shake the bench or do stomp or do something. We even went further and tried to fly little paper kites and this, and planes. And even we had a pipe, and we'd shoot a pea, chickpea and all that and so forth, and we'd get the caning. At the time canes were used. Benching was there. We had to bend down. Do you know what a benching means?

PILGRIM 1: To get struck?

ERUCH: Oh yeah. Caning is this, where you take your knee down and the Father gives you shots you see, they were the shots. But further than that, more mischief, you have to bend down on the bench where you are, and then he comes and slaps you on your fanny here. Yeah. So all this was there, going on. But that didn't curb our activities you know. Because we used to have fun, and I'm a strong person and he would always pick me out you see, for the mischief and all that. I was a mischievous kid too. So that's how the whole situation was there.

One day it went to an extent where it was terrible. What had happened was, I hadn't played the mischief. Somebody was taking

a class, some New Testament class was there and all that. And he was explaining a parable or something. And now I know that it was a parable. And then he was explaining something. And he was writing on the board and this and that, all that sort of thing. And one of the non-Catholics, blew a chickpea. Instead of just striking the board or anything, it struck him on his pant? [inaudible] you know. And he got so wild, he could go after anybody, knowing that he is the mischief maker, so he summoned me. And gave me such a thrashing, such a thrashing. In my life I haven't had that. So, I'm kneeling down and all that, so everything was turned red and all that. And he was so wild that he didn't know that he was holding the end of the cane, and the whole handle was on my [Eruch hits his leg to show the pilgrims] means it's not just a little cane there, but the whole handle would be there. So it was like that. And he gave me twenty shots and all that, something and he admonished me, and shouted at me and all that. And I would swear at him. Of course you can't swear loudly, but as a kid I still remember what I swore at him. [general laughter]

So that's— this happened. But this we don't want to take it all silently. What had happened is that, as soon as the class was over, I told all the non-Catholics were there. They also didn't like this attitude of the Father, so we all— I got out. My father was an engineer of the first degree, and the school had opened a technical class, so that's the reason why the Father, who is the Principal of the school had little, what they call, contact with my father to take his advice and all that. So he would do that. So he knew me by name, because my father's name, second name is Jessawala. So he knew me as Jessawala. So, I

emboldened myself. I knew that my father knows him, and he knows my father. So I said come on, let's go and report to the Principal. Look at this, I was not in the fault. You know that I was not in the fault. I didn't play the mischief. Had I played the mischief, I wouldn't have done this, but why is it that without— I'm innocent and why is an innocent person being beaten like that. So forth and so on. I was so furious, I stuttered, and foamed and all this was there.

So all other non-Catholics of the school came and found out this, and they said, "Okay, we'll join." And I lead the procession to the Principal's office. And I couldn't even speak out properly. I was stuttering you see, I was so furious and all that. "Calm down, Jessawala, calm down, calm down, what's the matter?" [Eruch imitating the Principal's voice] I said, "Father, see look at this, look at my hands, what happened." So you must have played mischief, as usual you must have played— "I didn't do, I'm an innocent person. Just ask these boys, you see." So all this is there, you know how the children are. "But what do you want?" "But look at Father— we are made to sit at the back of the class there and told to keep quiet and how can we keep quiet? Why can't we go out and play? Or allow us to take the course. We can follow the course also. Because we are missing 200 marks from our result sheets."

You know, those marks were not added into the non-Catholic's marks. Whatever their marks were given. You all now use the grades. Because our grades would be very much lowered, because we missed those marks that were given on the paper, you follow. 200 mark paper was there. 100 for Catechism, and 100 for Old Testament

and New Testament scriptures. So, “No, no, that is not the policy, you can’t all come. Go back to your class, go back.” “But Baba, Father, please allow us to go and play, or allow us to take the classes.” “You go, and go quietly down, go back.”

Well, nothing seemed to happen. We go back, we are— I’m very much disappointed and all that. Next day we come to the school and to my utter— we are there in the class, all of a sudden, big gong rings which meant that we are to assemble in the auditorium. Some big dignitary comes, or some big conference is there or something like that. So we all, class is dismissed, and we have to go there. So all are going there, we are going there, we all are— I saw the Principal already seated there, and there were the other Fathers and Brothers were there. All the staff and all the boys are there and all. So we are there, seated. I must have been at the time 14 years of age. 13 to 14 years of age. So the father gets up and gives a talk. And he opened the subject with the policy of the school. That we are — it’s a Roman Catholic school, and at first our policy was that to admit only the Roman Catholic boys and all that, but later on we realized that there was a need for the non-Catholics. Selected non-Catholics were admitted and all that sort of thing. And our policy was that non-Catholics, at the time of the scripture classes and all, they should be seated at the back of the class and they should do their homework. But now, it seems that there needs to be a change in the policy. And, I’m feeling very proud about it. That at least, he has recognized our need. He’s doing what I complained about. And he comes out with this, that now a time has come, when we were hesitating to ask the non-Catholics to attend the classes of the scriptures. But

time has come now— it seems that they are ready to accept those classes and would want to learn the life of the Lord and so forth. And so forth and so on, he went on and on and on. [Clock chimes] And now from henceforth, those who wish to join the classes, they are free to do so. And those who do not wish to join the classes, during the scripture classes, they can leave the classroom and go and play on the playground. And all that was over. Very serious meeting was there.

And I said— I was so proud and fine and I said, “Wow, wonderful, now we will go out and play!” and all that. In the meantime, I hear my name called out, “Eruch Jessawala,” from the Principal. So I stand up, “Yes Father.” He says, “Well have you heard what I have said?” “Yes Father, thank you very much.” “I want to know what you would want to do? Whether you’d want to go and play on the playground there, or continue in your classroom, taking the classes?” Well by that time, some self-respect had developed in me, it seems. And in the midst of all the crowd of people there, students and professors and all that, I didn’t have the heart to say that I would like to go and play out you see. So that’s how I got myself inducted in those classes. So I said, “Father, I would like to take the classes.” Much against my wish. He said, “I’m proud of you, good. Go and buy the books and start your studies immediately.” Okay, that’s how I started.

Now, what happened now. Come to the real story, this was the background. I buy the books, I join the classes. Gradually, I read. Of course catechism class was — I couldn’t follow much about the prayers and this and that. But I could follow something. But what attracted me was the

life of the Lord. The Old Testament of the Revelations time and Abraham and Moses and all that, and then the latest, the Gospels, they are beautiful. So as I'm progressing, as a year passes by, another year passes by. I have my questions, and the Fathers who abhorred my very presence there in the classroom at the time, now have— new-found liking is there, because they thought that I am a prospective Christian. Because I'm taking much interest in it. So I would ask questions and, "Father, I don't understand this, can I?— What's the meaning behind this?", and all this. So, they would very lovingly explain everything would be there, fine, and all the more I'm happy and feeling great you know, about it. And I'm studying, and I beat all the Roman Catholics, and stood first in class, or in that subject. And they were very happy about it, and fine, and everything is fine and all —

The time comes, with higher and higher studies is, what happens is, "Father, I don't understand this parable. I can't follow it." "Sit down, it's a mystery." So I sit down. After two weeks another thing crops up, "Sit down. Jessawala sit down. It's a mystery, it cannot be explained.. Okay, I'll sit down. Third time after another couple of months, another big question comes up, and this time he very nastily said, thinking that well, I'm all the time bothering him, "SIT DOWN. Don't you know that it's a mystery, it can't be explained? Just sit down." That was enough. That was the last time I must have emboldened to get up and ask something, but now, no. Then it was all inwardly. That is His grace most probably, and I started feeling you see, what is this? Every time I don't understand, it's a mystery. And He has said that He will be coming again. When will He come

again? Although He comes to my house, I don't know anything about it. I avoid Him. And He stands outside the gate. So much so, I still remember having on two occasions, cried a bit you see. Tears would run down my cheek in the classroom. How good it would be if we were there, we could follow Him and there would be no mystery, or nothing of the sort. How beautiful it would be, to be with Him. And He was there, at the gate all the time, in answer to my longing. But I avoided Him. Yeah. Each time.

So that's His compassion. He never— He always attends to our longing. He's the answer to our longing. Our longing is because of His answer, that is, that is foremost and then the longing comes. That's how it is.