

Miketz and Chanuka 5774

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Part A:

Albert Einstein labored unsuccessfully to determine what he called the “Unified Field Theory”, which combines the fundamental forces of physics into a single theoretical framework.

We find a similar attempt at unifying the principles underlying the holy Torah.

The Gemara (Makot 24a) quotes the prophet Chabakuk (chap. 2) who condensed the entire Torah into one sentence:

אֱמוּנָה אֵלֹהִים אֵלֵינוּ

And the righteous person shall live by his faith (belief)

What did the prophet mean by “Faith”? Faith in what?

Obviously it was that faith which provided the Macabbim with the courage to do battle against the Greek superpower. And the faith that fortified us with the tenacity to survive the unspeakable galut of 2000 years. And the faith that brought us back to Eretz Yisrael, expel the brutish British and declare national independence. And the faith which drives us to create a Torah empire not seen since the time of the Tannaim.

And that faith which drives us to create a Gan Eden in the midst of the Middle East Arab Gehenom.

One might answer that the object of our faith is the single omniscient God who created the worlds. However, many gentiles share our belief in God, yet the prophet would not deem them “tzadikim”!

So, indeed, what is the object of our faith that so empowers us to be what we are and that evoked the prophetic proclamation of Chabakuk, *“And the righteous person shall live by his faith?”*

It is the Jewish unified field which brings together all Jews and all things Jewish. It is the unremitting, enduring, unvarying knowledge resonating in every pure Jewish heart that we are **God's chosen people.**

Three times a day we recite in Aleinu Le'sha'bay'ach.

*It is our duty to praise the Master of all, to exalt the Creator of the universe, who has not made us like the nations of the world and has not placed us like the families of the earth. **Who has not designed our destiny to be like theirs nor our lot like that of all their multitude.***

Through Aleinu we declare our conscious knowledge that we are God's chosen people.

The selection of the Jewish people as a distinct entity apart from the “family of nations” is apparent in the two essential miracles of Chanuka – the military victory and the miracle of the menorah.

The military victory was visible for all to see. The miracle of the menorah transpired in the privacy of the Temple's sanctuary (kodesh). The visible miracle was for the world to realize our special connection with the Creator. The miracle of the private and enclosed menorah expressed the intimate relationship between HaShem and His people.

Picture a wedding scene with 1000 guests in a palatial hall.

The food, the music, the speeches, the tears of happiness and blessings for a long happy life – its all there.

By midnight, the band has already gone, the waiters have cleaned off the tables, the last of the guests have left and

the lights dimmed. At this special moment, the chatan and kallah – alone for the first time this night – walk to the middle of the floor and dance with the intimacy of their thoughts.

This is what it means to be the chosen one of HaShem. Rabbi Akiva said that all the holy writings of the TaNaCh are kodesh (holy), but Shir HaShirim (the Song of Songs) is kodesh kadoshim (holy of holies.) It is a metaphor expressing the relationship between HaShem and the Jewish nation as a chatan and kallah.

The intimacy of HaShem and His chosen kallah was designated to be in Eretz Yisrael. It is only here that ne'vua (prophecy) was possible.

The vast majority of the people in Eretz Yisrael today, including the non-observant, admit that there is a special relationship between us and the Almighty. That this relationship, in their mind, does not necessarily require one to refrain from driving on Shabbat is what differentiates the dati and non-dati – but not the way we define ourselves as the chosen ones of God.

The litmus test of this belief is the declaration of Aleinu:

Who has not designed our destiny to be like theirs nor our lot like that of all their multitude.

When a Jew chooses to live among the gentiles, by necessity their destiny will be his.

If you believe that we are HaShem's chosen people, and hence our destiny is a privileged one, why are you living among the goyim?

Ask your rabbi or rosh yeshiva how can he recite "Aleinu" while refusing to cast his lot and destiny with his brothers and sisters in Eretz Yisrael.

Part B:

A student at the Hebrew University was noticeably affected while reading the Bible . When his professor inquired about what had so aroused his enthusiasm, the young man replied that it was the story of the parting of the Red Sea. The professor, who was not Torah-observant, told the young student to relax, because, according to the scientists, the Red Sea at that time was, at most, ten centimeters deep. A few minutes later, the young student became even more enthusiastic about what he was reading, and again the professor asked for the reason. The student replied, "What a great God we have. He was able to drown the entire Egyptian army in just ten centimeters of water."

I can understand that, as a man of logic and reason, the professor would see some of the episodes related in the Torah as outlandishly fantastic. Including the episode in parashat Lech Lecha, which relates how Avraham and his 318 student-soldiers vanquished the allied forces of four major kings with their trained and battle-veteran troops.

But the dilemma regarding this battle begins much before the final victory.

There was a military alliance of four powerful kings:

King Amrafel of Shin'ar, identified as Bavel (Iraq); King Aryoch of Alasar; King Kadarla'omer of Elam, identified as Persia; and King Tidal of Goyim, identified as the head of an alliance of many smaller states.

It would be logical to conclude that these four kings were on their way to further conquests after defeating the five kings of the Jordan Valley. The entire region was under threat of conquest; because after their stunning victory in Eretz Yisrael, the four kings were not going home to relax – for nothing succeeds more than success. On this background, it would be safe to assume that the region's nations, such as

Egypt and the countries of North Africa and Asia Minor, were sharpening their spears in preparation to defend their countries.

But nothing of the sort is recorded in the Torah. Quite the opposite! The only force that gathered to make battle with the four kings was Avraham and his 318 student-soldiers.

Our highly respected professor in the above story would be justified in casting doubt on the reliability of the biblical account of Avraham's battle against these four powerful kings, except for one undeniable fact! A similar scenario is taking place today under our very noses.

The civilized world is being threatened by the enemies of basic human rights, led by the Islamic-fascist state of Iran. The mad leadership of Iran belongs to the Islam sect of Shiites that believes that their last Imam, who is their Mashiach, will appear only on the background of a universal catastrophe. And it is the mission of Iran to bring about that horrific catastrophe that is driving the Iranians to forge ahead with their nuclear program.

On this background, one would expect the Christian nations to band together with the Sunni Arab nations to preempt this threat. The USA, with its vast military capability, and the United Nations, with its capacity to organize an international military force, would be expected to lead the free world in guarding that freedom.

However, the reality of Avraham vs. the four kings has come back to haunt the free world . The eyes of free people are not focused on the world's military powers, but rather the object of the world's expectations to eradicate the Iranian threat is none other than the isolated, besmirched and hated State of Israel. Will we attack? When will it happen? How will we surprise the Iranians? Planes? Submarines? Cruise missiles? Land forces? How will the Israelis do it?

As in the time of Avraham, when the free world was petrified by fear, so too in our days minuscule David will have to stride to center stage in order to destroy the mad Goliath.

So the episode in parashat Lech Lecha becomes frighteningly realistic even to the cynical agnostic professor of Hebrew University.

But there is a difference! It is called Tzahal. Avraham, by necessity, was aided by HaShem in a supernatural way – with 318 soldiers defeating four armies. But in our times, HaShem expects the Jewish nation to act according to the Torah and the rules governing human behavior where miracles are subtly hidden. The fist of Am Yisrael is our young holy soldiers of Tzahal.

In closing. The episodes of the Torah depict what occurred in those times; but they are also projections of what will transpire to Am Yisrael in our time, prior to the advent of the Mashiach. So when Israel acts, the world will be taken by surprise; but not us, who know the future by learning the “simple” stories of our past.

Shabbat Shalom & Chanukah Sameach!

Nachman Kahana

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