

Acharei and Kedoshim 5781

BS"D Parshiot Acharei and Kedoshim 5781

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Thoughts Following Yom Ha'atz'maut

In Bamidbar chapter 14, the Torah relates the tragic episode of the ten miraglim (spies or scouts) who convinced the nation to defy the wishes of HaShem that they liberate Eretz Yisrael from its Canaanite occupiers. As a consequence, the miraglim died immediately and the entire male generation between the ages of 20 and 60 were condemned to die within the coming 39 years. When the nation heard that HaShem had declared them to be persona non grata, many of them (known as the ma'apie'lim) informed Moshe that they regretted their decision to follow the miraglim and were now prepared to enter Eretz Yisrael. Moshe warned them that for the time being, HaShem would not perform miraculous military victories; so, they would be endangering their lives by entering the Land. The ma'a'pie'lim ignored Moshe's warning, entered the Land, and were destroyed.

HaShem used the punishment of persona non grata beginning with Adam and Chava, who were expelled from Gan Eden, then with Kayin (Cain) who was excluded from the company of men to be a wanderer his whole life, and Lot who was sent away by Avraham, and a metzora who may not enter a walled city.

Eyes that cannot see, ears that

cannot hear

A while back, the Ha'aretz newspaper, which cannot be accused of being overly Zionist, published an article in its English edition on the subject of aliyah from the United States. The following are excerpts from the article:

1) Immigrating to Israel (aliyah) was never a top priority for the Jews of the United States. But as Israel prepares this week to mark Independence Day the subject has disappeared completely from the community's agenda.

2) Aliyah is not mentioned at all in the list of subjects for discussion at Jewish conferences; its place will not be found at gatherings of organizations and institutions that pride themselves on being Zionists and ask for community support to build close ties to Israel.

3) Israeli cabinet ministers and senior officials who appear at Jewish functions have for some time stopped talking about the necessity for aliyah and are cautious about even paying lip service to the notion. The Jewish Agency, whose mission used to be promoting aliyah and helping immigration to Israel, has officially, declaratively removed the word "aliyah" from its list of priorities.

4) Nefesh B'Nefesh, an organization that tries to fill the void the agency left, operates privately and in limited fashion in the United States, as if ashamed to be seen doing something so unacceptable and unfashionable in the community's eyes. Nefesh B'Nefesh brings some 2,000 new immigrants from North America to Israel every year. That they are mainly religious does not mean they decided to make aliyah because of the preaching of rabbis or religious figures. If a small minority on the fringes of the Orthodox community immigrates to Israel, it is despite the total silence on the subject of American Jewish religious

leaders.

5) The previous generation of American rabbis still spoke of settling the land, preaching that it was a "mitzva" to do so. Today Orthodox rabbis and other influential figures have dropped the issue entirely from their sermons and speeches.

Contemporary Jewish life in the USA is essentially a replay of the major sin that brought about the near tragedy of Purim. The Jews in Persia had deteriorated so far in their assimilation process that they even dined at the king's royal feast while eating and drinking from the sacred vessels taken from the Bet Hamikdash.

While it is not specifically recorded, I have the feeling that the Jews would never have taken this giant step towards spiritual suicide without rabbinic permission. I can close my eyes and hear the "heterim" (permits) promulgated in the shuls and Jewish newspapers. "We cannot permit ourselves to be the only ethnic group not participating in the king's feast", or "It's a one-time situation, therefore one may be lenient in the matter". And the list continues ad nauseum.

The Jewish people are composed of two essential elements: we are a national entity and possess a unique spiritual-ritual way of life.

Do we not pronounce the following blessing over the Torah?

יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

God who has chosen us over all other nations and has presented us with His Torah.

This is an indivisible duality, where each factor exists only by virtue of the other. One who relinquishes the spiritual-ritualistic component, will eventually – he or his close descendants – surely lose their national association, and

conversely: one who separates himself from the major cohesive factor of nationality – a common land and language – will eventually find no reason to continue in its ritualist ways. This is a time-tested formula, immutably set in concrete in our history.

When rabbis no longer teach that the essence of HaShem's covenant with the Jewish people, as detailed in this week's parsha about the requirements for us to be a holy nation and our keeping of the Torah **IN** Eretz Yisrael, it is only a question of time before spiritual gangrene begins to rot away at the nation's cohesion.

Now, if the presence of rabbis, yeshivot and orthodox communities in today's galuyot (lands of our exile) were a neutral phenomenon that had little or no effect on the world scene, it would be bad enough. But the existence of these religious, ultra-religious and ultra ultra-religious communities and people resonate to the world; to the few friends we have and to the billions of our enemies, a disastrous, **untrue message**: that the Creator did not give us the Holy Land, and hence we are not God's chosen people.

Because when the Creator gives you a gift you do not turn it down with crippled, lame excuses such as "when the Mashiach will come" or the three vows (Tractate Ketivot), which are passé.

On Yom Ha'Atzma'ut we recite the Hallel prayer which contains the words: "They have eyes but cannot see, ears but cannot hear." I wonder if King David, when he wrote these words with idol worshippers in mind, could have imagined that they would apply perfectly to the religious leaders in today's galut, who have eyes, ears and brains, but are unable to perceive that the world of the galut is now in the midst of its death throes, while the new-old world of the Jewish nation is being reshaped in Eretz Yisrael today?

It came to my mind that our Minister of the Interior should declare all the religious leaders who oppose the Medina through word of mouth or by disregarding its existence as being persona non grata. But then I realized that it would be superfluous, an unnecessary redundant act. Because HaShem has already elegantly and subtlety deemed them persona non grata, by leading them to believe that they need not come on aliya to God's Holy Land.

Last Thursday on Yom Ha'Atzma'ut, there was an air force "fly past". And the thought passed over me that during WW2 we begged the major ally nations to use their air forces to bomb the concentration camps, or at least the rail tracks, and thereby every day save tens of thousands of Jews.

Not once, during all those years, did an American, British, or other ally plane bomb a camp or the tracks. But how wondrous are Your ways – Hashem!

Today the world is holding its breath and counting the minutes when our Israeli Air Force will bomb the Iranians and rid the world of that scourge.

Indeed! How wondrous are Your ways, the God of Israel.

Shabbat Shalom,

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