

Aikev 5780

BS"D Parashat Aikev 5780

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Reasons to Feel Proud

A: The Gemara (Shabbat 30b) records a didactic strategy that the illustrious amora Raba ben Nachmani would employ in order to gain the attention of his students before entering into a complex halachic discourse. He would begin with a humorous story or joke. So, in the spirit of the 15th of Menachem Av, one of the two happiest days in the lives of our people's years ago, permit me to begin with a humorous story.

In Chicago a 15-year-old 6'7" high school basketball star was removed from the team due to scholastic "shortcomings". One day, the teacher informed the class that he was going to give the young man a chance to prove his intellectual prowess by answering one question! How much is 4 plus 5? After a moment of silence, the student answered "9". The entire class jumped to their feet and begged the teacher to give him another chance.

The point of the story is that ten years later, this same young man was now a player in the NBA, and was being paid millions of dollars a year by a company to promote their sports shoes. The implication was that if you wear them, you too will be able to leap as high as a kangaroo.

The power of endorsement!

B: This week's parsha is the ultimate endorsement of a product by its producer. In chapter 8,7-10, the pasuk states:

אֶרֶץ זָבַח מַיִם עֲיָנוֹת יֹצְאוֹת בְּעֵמֶק וּבְהַר אֶרֶץ
:אֶרֶץ זָבַח מַיִם עֲיָנוֹת יֹצְאוֹת בְּעֵמֶק וּבְהַר אֶרֶץ
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:אֶרֶץ זָבַח מַיִם עֲיָנוֹת יֹצְאוֹת בְּעֵמֶק וּבְהַר אֶרֶץ

⁷ For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land,
– a land with brooks, streams, and deep springs gushing out
into the valleys and hills;

⁸ a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees,
pomegranates, olive oil and honey;

⁹ a land where bread will not be scarce, and you will lack
nothing; a land where the rocks are iron, and you can dig
copper out of the hills.

¹⁰ When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord
your God for the good land he has given you.

And in verses 11 through 12 the Torah relates the greatness of
Eretz Yisrael, as endorsed by the Creator Himself.

אֶרֶץ זָבַח מַיִם עֲיָנוֹת יֹצְאוֹת בְּעֵמֶק וּבְהַר אֶרֶץ
:אֶרֶץ זָבַח מַיִם עֲיָנוֹת יֹצְאוֹת בְּעֵמֶק וּבְהַר אֶרֶץ

A land which the Lord your God perpetually demands (cares

for); the eyes of the Lord your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to the end of the year

These are not mortals recommending sports shoes. This is the ultimate endorsement from the Creator Himself who constantly observes what is occurring in His holy land. In a similar vein I wish to endorse the wonders of our great Medinat Yisrael, as it is being led upwards by the Creator Himself.

C: Following is an excerpt from my forthcoming autobiography, that will be titled **"Aliya Made Us"** . It describes our arrival at the yeshiva in Moshav Nechalim where I was going to be teaching.

A month before the opening of the school year, we went to our future home in Moshav Nechalim, located halfway between the national airport and Petach Tikva. According to the contract I had signed in New York, the yeshiva agreed to provide us with housing. The exact word in the contract was "tzrif", which translated in our dictionary to bungalow or hut. We convinced ourselves that "bungalow" would be the more realistic meaning.

Upon arriving in Nechalim, we were greeted warmly by Rabbi Yosef Bagad, who had established the yeshiva. He took us to see the "tzrif" which would be our first home in the Holy Land and was intended to house all of our live's material possessions.

As we made our way to the "bungalow", we were joined by a workman who was dragging a lawn mower. I had the feeling that this was not a portent of good things to come. We arrived at a small wooden hut whose entrance was obscured by tall grass. The worker cut the grass so that we could enter. However, the grass did not stop at the entrance, but continued growing through the floor tiles of the entire hut. I looked at Feige and she looked at me, and we both

looked at Rabbi Bagad. He half apologized and half encouraged us with something to the affect that "Eretz Yisrael is built from the ground up..."

I can remember vividly Feige with a pair of scissors in her hand and sitting on the floor of the hut cutting the grass between the tiles. Another scene that always brings a smile to my face is when Feige would bring an empty pot to our farmer-neighbor and return with milk warm from the cow, and with freshly laid eggs. Not to be forgotten is the local grocery where we and many others would purchase a half loaf of bread because a whole one was too expensive.

To the point.

This week Feige and I were hosted to a grand tour of the luxurious Jerusalem Estates Project, which is being constructed on the former Shneller army base in the Geula neighborhood.

The guide was our son Efrayim, one of Yerushalayim's master builders. He is the project manager responsible for quality control and synchronization of the more than 30 contractors and sub-contractors in the beehive of the project.

This is not an endorsement to purchase one or two or five apartments as some very wealthy religious families have done, but a testament to the advances our Medina has made over the 58 years that we have part of that destiny.

The beauty of the planned 13 building complex (five of which are currently being completed) is indescribable. We entered one of the completed apartments, which serves as a model and includes standard sophisticated lighting, audio and other automatic systems, and furnishings costing well over a million shekels.

Two thoughts came to my mind while viewing this project. If this is olam hazeh (this world), then what does Gan Eden look

like? The other is more practical and is the point of this week's article.

When we came on aliya in 1962, a luxury apartment consisted of 3 rooms: 2 bedrooms and a living room (in Israel, kitchen and bathrooms are not counted). The cost at that time was around \$20,000, well out of reach for the vast majority of Israelis. My salary was 400 liras a month, equal at the time to \$115.

Construction is only one aspect of our national effort to restore the grandeur that was once Am Yisrael. Not to mention the 110-story building which will be constructed in Ramat Gan.

Despite being geographically small, the Medina is on the cutting edge of all areas of science and technology including:

Solar power, natural gas, space science and technology

Aerospace engineering, agricultural engineering

Computer engineering, cybersecurity

Hydraulic engineering, water-saving technologies

Military engineering, life sciences and biotechnology.

And in the Torah world there are more students and talmidai chachamim in the city of Yerushalayim than in all other parts of the world combined.

So, the Jews in Eretz Yisrael must be doing something right, as this week's parasha states:

-וְיָדַעְתָּ כִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד
:וְיָדַעְתָּ כִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד

וְיָדַעְתָּ כִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד
וְיָדַעְתָּ כִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד

When you abide by these laws and are deliberate in following them, the Lord your God will keep His covenant of love with you, as He swore to your ancestors. He will love you and bless you and increase your numbers. He will bless the fruit of your womb, the crops of your land, your grain, new wine and olive oil, the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks in the land He swore to your ancestors to give you.

As we near the end of the Book of Devarim and look back at what we read during the past year, it becomes clear that in addition to all else the Torah is a love story – a love story between the Creator and Am Yisrael. He is the eternal chatan and we His kallah. There is no sin nor wayward act too dastardly for HaShem to forgive. He is waiting for us to return to Him.

So, let us be proud of who we are and who made us what we are. And this is just the beginning.

Remember the three Bs:

B careful, **B** healthy, **B** here

– and JLMM Jewish Lives Matter More

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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