

Bechukotai 5779

BS"D Parashat Bechukotai 5779

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

The U.S. Military is in Serious Trouble

"The report notes that the United States now faces five rising challenges—China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, and transnational terrorism; yet has fewer military forces than at any time since the end of World War II."

A report of the National Defense Strategy Commission contains conclusions with profound implications for U.S. national security. In sixty-four pages of plain language, the commission paints an extraordinarily troubling picture of the state of U.S. national defenses, calling our present situation a "grave crisis" demanding "extraordinary urgency."

The air force is undermanned with hundreds of pilots and many more planes needed to deal with the pending dangers. The navy is in need of many more new ships and those now in service need to be upgraded. And the army requires many more divisions to make up the deficit of a half million men.

This dire situation was caused by President Obama who withheld huge sums of money from the military.

The realities of "real politic" will force the loyal Americans in Congress to dramatically increase the military budget. These realities are the North Korean threat, China's military expansionism in the Pacific and South East Asia, the planned

monopolization of raw materials in Africa by the Chinese, the Iranian nuclear threat and their plans to engulf the oil rich states of the Gulf, and Islamic expansion in Africa. All these and much more will force President Trump or the one who will follow him, to sign bills to expand the US military as never before. To this add the necessity to have a very large internal police force as part of the Department of Homeland Security.

And as the military grows, the inevitable result will be its growing influence on the government and the nation's legal process.

But what does this have to do with the Jewish communities of America?

Answer: It will create a situation whereby aliya will be difficult for many families and close to impossible for others.

The increase in military might and the very large internal police force of the Department for Homeland Security will, by necessity, require the reinstatement of the Selective Service Act. Your sons and daughters will be drafted into the US army.

There will be no exemptions for divinity students, and no more one or two-year learning stints in a yeshiva in Eretz Yisrael. When the law is reenacted, young men and women from the ages of 14 to 28 will be prohibited from leaving the country.

To make matters worse, it will be necessary to limit the dollar flow out of the country in order to finance such a large internal and external military.

Between the draft and the limited foreign spending, aliya will become a dead issue.

Following is a short story I wrote, which appears in the first volume of my book "With All Your Might," to illustrate the

point:

The phone rang in the nearly empty, topsy-turvy home of the Levines as they prepare for their aliya to Eretz Yisrael.

Mrs. Beth Levine nervously let the wrapping cord fall from her hand as she ran to answer the phone. Too late. The light on the phone's base signaled that there was a recorded message.

She pushed the "play" button and a familiar voice spoke: "Hello, this is Miri from Nefesh b'Nefesh. I have two messages for you; a happy one and another, a bit disappointing. The movers will be coming to your home tomorrow morning, Monday, at exactly 7:00 AM, so please be ready. And the not so happy news...I know how much you wanted the three ABC seats by the window, because of your names Al, Beth and Carol, plus the adjoining D seat of the middle section for David, on this Thursday's flight. But because you are a family of four you were assigned the four DEFG seats in the middle section. In any event, the thrill of going on aliya will certainly overshadow such minor irritations. Aliya tova!"

Miri was so right, Mrs. Levine thought to herself. The thrill of a dream-come-true leaves no room for such mundane issues as seating on a plane; although it would have been nice to see the coastline of Israel drawing closer as the "wings of eagles" brought them home.

Al and Beth Levine had decided to come on aliya five years ago, when Carol was ten and David had his bar-mitzva. However, it took five years for Al to find a suitable replacement in his law firm; in addition, selling the house for the right price was a protracted process. But thank God, the local shul bought it to serve as the community home for whichever rabbi would be serving at the time.

In the interim, the Levines kept up with current events in Israel, as well as developments in the Middle East, and kept their dream alive.

Tensions were high. Iran, patron of the murderous Hezbollah and Hamas gangs, continued to develop a nuclear capacity. The United Nations Security Council passed a limited economic boycott resolution against Iran, and in an angry knee-jerk response, the Iranians decreased their sale of oil, causing the world price to jump to \$100 a barrel! As if this was not bad enough, Venezuela's leftist president signed a ten-year agreement to sell its oil exclusively to China, which brought the price of gas at the pump to \$7 a gallon, with no sign that this would be the final price.

But none of this could detract from their decision to come on aliya.

David is to begin Bar Ilan University right after the holidays and Carol is registered in the Ulpan in Kiryat Arba. David was the crisis person in the decision. Youngsters of his age in Israel are drafted into the IDF, but David was promised that he would be permitted to finish his BA uninterrupted by army service.

With this issue behind them, there was really nothing to prevent the Levines from taking the step of a lifetime.

The one annoying factor in their aliya was the attitude of some relatives and friends, who, perhaps for reasons of jealousy or personal weakness, were very critical their plans. "What's the rush? Wait until the children finish school. You're now at your peak earning power. Is this the time to leave?"

On the other hand, the Rabbi was wonderful. On Shabbat, he spoke from the pulpit on the mitzvah of living in Eretz Yisrael. He praised the Levines, saying how they would be missed in the many areas of their community involvement. Al for giving up his Sundays in order to coach the shul's little league team; Beth for being the Shabbat kiddish coordinator; Carol for helping her mother with the kiddishes and David for

managing the shul's teen activities.

But, of course, the Rabbi was careful to point out that the mitzvah of living in Eretz Yisrael was in the category of a four-cornered garment, which although not mandatory to wear, if one should do so he would be required to attach to it tzitzit and merit a mitzvah. So too, one is not required to "go up to the land" until the Mashiach comes, but if one should do so he merits a great mitzvah.

To their skeptical friends and relatives, Al would respond that there have been so many warnings of late that the time has come to go home. So, if not now, when?

The following day, on Monday, true to Miri's message, the movers arrived at 7:00 AM sharp to take all the worldly possessions of the Levine family to the packing company, and from there to Israel.

Packing was an unforgettable experience.

Beth Levine stood wondering how they "succeeded" in 20 years of marriage to accumulate so much "stuff". They began in the attic, which served as a nostalgic trip into the past. Many memories were evoked as they rummaged through their possessions. The less-than-modest wedding gown which Mrs. Levine did not want her Carol to see. A 78 RPM record player, Al's catcher's mitt, which he could not part with. Old photographs from the Pineview and Pioneer Hotels and summer camps. How these experiences have sweetened with time.

But life goes on. And with a mental scissors, they will be severed in the light of the new life in the Promised Land.

Eventually, much was given away, more was thrown out, and the necessary articles were now packed in cartons to be shipped off.

In the packing process, the Levines concluded that Moshe

Rabbeinu was so right in ordering the Jews to leave with only a few matzot, because if they would have been permitted to bring their possessions, we would still be in Mitzrayim.

Ten in the morning and the movers had finished about half the work. A Western Union messenger suddenly arrived with a telegram for Mr. David Levine.

Al signed for it, opened the envelope and read aloud.

“Greetings. You are hereby informed that The President of the United States of America and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, and Congress in emergency session, have passed the Selective Service Act of 2013, to be enforced immediately. You are hereby ordered to report on May 14, 2013 to the Induction Center at 1948 Independence Avenue for induction into the armed services for a period of not less than three years. You will be sent to Paris Island, Georgia, to commence basic training as a proud United States Marine. Your passport will be on hold until the completion of your military service. Good luck and God’s speed to you in the service of your country.”

Al handed the telegram to Beth as the phone suddenly rang. He got there too late to answer, but the light on the phone’s base signaled that there was a recorded message.

Al pushed the “play” button and a familiar voice sounded.

“Hello, this is Miri again from Nefesh b’Nefesh. Good news. Due to several unexpected last-minute cancellations we have been able to get for you the three ABC seats near the window and the D in the middle. Derech Tze’lei’cha.”

HaShem works with a stopwatch!

But, unfortunately for the Jews of America, the reply of their rabbinic halachic experts will simply be that as citizens of the United States, which has given so much to the Jewish people, if there will be a draft then it would be a Torah

obligation to close the Gamarot and answer the call.

Here in The Land...

There is an anecdote which is no longer relevant. Why did the Jews wander for 40 years in the desert before coming into Eretz Yisrael? Because Moshe was searching for a place in the Middle East where there was not one drop of oil or gas.

Today, Baruch HaShem, in view of the huge gas and oil finds in the waters off our coast, Israel will soon be a major gas exporter. In fact, our gas finds are the largest ones discovered in the world in the last decade.

The oil in the ground of the Medina which can be released by fracking is estimated to be larger than the oil reserves in Saudi Arabia!

Not bad for a country the size of New Jersey, whose claim to be the Torah capital of the world goes unchallenged. Whose scientific achievements are at the cutting edge of all scientific disciplines. Whose military, although small, is the smartest in the world which the three hundred million Arabs in the immediate vicinity do not dare to challenge.

In Medinat Yisrael, reality is not what you see but what the hand of HaShem performs behind the curtains of history.

HaShem still has much to do here before we can sit back and celebrate the coveted "yom sh'kulo shabbat" – a time which will be as a never-ending Shabbat. But it WILL happen, and happy is the Jew, in this world and in the next, who merits to take part in the return of HaShem's shechina (holy spirit) to Eretz Yisrael.

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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