

the people's psyche to the extent that no amount of time or revelation would ever restore them to their regal status of their illustrious forefathers Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov?

Whatever the reality, Moshe was dejected to the point of preferring his demise over having to continue to lead the people.

HaShem did not react to Moshe's disappointments by pacifying him with the good that exists in the Jewish nation, all to the credit of Moshe. HaShem's silence was tacit agreement that the nation was far from the ideal of serving as HaShem's chosen nation. Instead, HaShem relates to the personal difficulties that Moshe was facing and directs him to choose 70 leading personalities to assist in leading the nation.

We can only speculate as to what Moshe Rabbeinu would feel were he alive today.

He would probably be tolerant of the Jews who are removed from Torah and mitzvot after 2000 years of bad history with no visible signs of Godly intervention. As he was when the Jews sinned and Moshe prayed to HaShem to refrain from punishing them (parashat Ki Tisa).

He would understand that religious role models leave much to be desired, especially among the Jews in the galut where the reform and conservative "rabbinate" is a well-paying career (much like the agreement between Dr. Faustus who sold his soul to Mephistopheles in return for 24 years of material reward).

Moshe would be less tolerant of the Torah leaders who speak in his name while expressing offensive and loathsome ideas which do not connect to the holy Torah Moshe brought down from Mount Sinai (parashat Korach).

After 2000 terrible years of exile, HaShem has opened the gates of Eretz Yisrael wide for all his children to return. And after the unspeakable Shoah and the miracles we experience

here in Eretz Yisrael on a daily basis, Moshe would expect that not one Torah observant Jew would remain outside the borders of the Holy land.

It would bring to his mind the 80% of the Jewish people who chose to remain in Egypt rather than to follow him into the challenging desert (parashat Beshalach).

Moshe would cringe at the idea promulgated by many venerable spiritual leaders in the galut, and even some in Eretz Yisrael, that we are prohibited from forming a national entity in our homeland prior to the Mashiach. This would certainly remind him of the miraglim experience when the nation refused to enter the land for lack of belief in HaShem's promise that He would protect us from the dangers in the Land (Parashat Shlach).

After the Egyptian experience, and the Greek and Roman conquests of the Holy Land, Moshe would never fathom the idea that a normal Jew would willingly agree to be under a gentile government in Eretz Yisrael. That a Torah observant Jew would prefer the British mandate or an Arab government over a free and independent Jewish one, would be repulsive to the great Moshe.

This would arouse in Moshe terrible memories of those in the nation who repeatedly desired to return to the paradise of Egyptian rule where the watermelons and onions were so tempting (Beshalach and Beha'alotcha).

If Moshe would see young observant Jews using the study of his Torah as a means of evading army service in the mitzva of destroying Amalek, he would recall his command to Yehoshua to form an army and lead it in war against Amalek. And let no one delude himself in thinking that Arabs are not Amalek (parashat Beshalach).

Were Moshe to see today a Jew from Meah Sha'arim or Bet Shemesh hitting another Jew because he was wearing the uniform

of Tzahal, Moshe would quickly remember when Datan hit Aviram and Moshe called the attacker “rasha” (parashat Shemot).

At this point Moshe would throw his arms high and scream: “Shlomo ben David King of Israel. You were so correct when you wrote in Kohelet (1,9), “There is nothing new under the sun”.

Were Moshe here today and directed by HaShem to choose 70 righteous men to form a Sanhedrin, the first place he would search would be in the our 70 Hesder Yeshivot!

Excerpt from the book “With All Your Might”

Eight times in his commentary on Chumash, Rashi asks lama nisma'cha (“why did the Torah choose this particular sequence of verses?”)

One of them is the link between the final episode of our parasha, Be'ha'alotcha, where Miriam questions Moshe's decision to leave the family unit and live alone, and next week's parasha, Sh'lach which opens with the sin of the miraglim (the spies) who spoke disparagingly of Eretz Yisrael .

Rashi explains the sequence on the background of the shared sin of lashon hara – Miriam speaks inappropriately against her brother, as do the miraglim against Eretz Yisrael.

What remains difficult to understand is the unusual harshness with which Hashem treated these sinners: Miriam was smitten with tzara'at, and the miraglim died a horrendous death. This appears to be an overly-harsh punishment for lashon hara!

I suggest:

Parashat Be'ha'alotcha is replete with many diverse themes:

The menorah, hewn out of a solid block of gold

Consecration of the Le'vi'im

Pesach Sheni on the 14th of Iyar

The clouds over the Israelite camp

The silver bugles (chatzotzrot)

The manna

Choosing 70 members for the Sanhedrin (Moshe was the 71st)

At first glance, it is difficult to find a reason for these diverse subjects to appear in the same Parasha. However, they share a common denominator – each one is either a substitute for something, or can be substituted by something else:

1. The golden menora, which was fashioned from one solid block of gold, may be substituted by any other metal, which may be welded or pieced together in any fashion and need not be made from a solid block of that metal.
2. The Le'vi'im are substitutes for the first born (bechorot), who forfeited their privilege to perform the sacrificial duties.
3. Pesach Sheni on the 14th of Iyar is a second opportunity for anyone who was halachically unable to bring a korban Pesach on the 14th of Nissan.
4. The clouds, which protected and guided the camp, changed from a cloud during the daylight hours to a pillar of fire during the hours of darkness.
5. The original silver chatzotzrot were set aside until future times, and replaced with a second set.
6. The manna would change in taste according to the preference of the eater.

The Torah is teaching us that everything in the world – the menorah, the firstborn, etc. has a substitute (the cemetery is filled with people the world cannot exist without). Everything, that is, except for two things which are above any possibility of substitution – the Torah and Eretz Yisrael.

Moshe is the personification of Torah in this world. To speak disparagingly of Moshe, as Miriam did, is to defile the Torah. Miriam knew that her brother was the wisest and holiest of men, but in her eyes Moshe was still a man prone to mistakes as everyone else. But she was mistaken. Moshe was outwardly a “man,” but inwardly he was now different than anyone else in the world. Miriam was not cautious in her criticism, and for this she was harshly punished.

To speak disparagingly of Eretz Yisrael in any way is a Chilul HaShem – and for this the miraglim were so harshly punished, because they made the same mistake as Miriam. They saw Eretz Yisrael as one views any other place on earth – water, hills, vegetation – a beautiful land, but no different than most places on earth. They saw the exterior of the land; but they did not comprehend that just as Moshe was “different” from any person who ever lived, so too is Eretz Yisrael different than any place on this planet – and for this they were punished.

Just as Christianity, Islam and Buddhism can never replace the Torah and Judaism, so too no place on this planet or in the created universe can replace the sanctity of Eretz Yisrael.

The towns of Satmar, Belz, Lubavitch and Lakewood can never attain the kedusha of the most remote piece of desert in Eretz Yisrael .

All the yeshivot and synagogues in the USA put together do not contain the kedusha of a football field in Eretz Yisrael .

If I live a thousand years, I will never understand how a

religious Jew can willingly choose to remain outside the Holy Land when the gates are open wide and our mother Rachel calls out to her children to return home (Yirmiyahu chapter 31).

But perhaps the answer lies in the following story:

A man was mountain climbing when night fell and the pouring rain created zero visibility. He slipped and began falling to certain death. Suddenly he put out his hand and grabbed onto a branch jutting out of the mountainside, and found himself suspended between heaven and earth.

He began to pray. A thunderous voice emerged from nowhere. "Do you believe in Me?" the voice asked. The poor fellow cried out, "With all my heart and soul, I believe in You."

"Do you believe I can save you?" HaShem asked. "I believe with every sinew in my body that You can save me."

"In that case," thundered the voice, "LET GO!"

The following morning, they found the man hanging on to the branch and dead of hypothermia, when between him and solid ground was a distance of one meter.

The lesson to be gleaned from this story is: some people just cannot LET GO, even when HaShem comes to save their physical and spiritual lives.

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

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