

Behar 5776

BS"D Parashat Behar 5776

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The Parsha and Current Events: Disputes Between Jews & Gentiles

Religious disputations between Jews and gentiles have a long and mostly tragic history for the Jewish side, especially when we came out victorious in the debates.

The first religious disputation is recorded in the book of Shemot, when Moshe in the name of HaShem demanded that Paro permit the Jews to worship HaShem in the desert (Shemot 5,1-2):

(וַיִּבְרָח מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן מִפָּרֹחַד וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל פַּרְעֹה אֵלֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְעַתָּה מְנַחֵם אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַתָּה מְנַחֵם אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַתָּה מְנַחֵם אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל (שְׁמוֹת פ"ה ט"ו)

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Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the wilderness.'"

Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord and I will not let Israel go."

Another early recorded disputation took place at Alexandria about 150 B.C.E., under Ptolemy Philometor, between Andronicus

ben Meshullam and the Samaritans Sabbeus and Dositheus.

The Byzantine empire, Basil I (9th century) disputations, usually resulted in expulsion and persecution of the Jews.

Pope Innocent III initiated the Inquisition into Christendom, and the Dominicans began their war against dissenters, the disputations became associated with persecution of the Jews.

The most famous disputation took place at Barcelona on July 20, 1263, in the presence of James I of Aragon and his court, between the Ramban and Pablo Christiani.

Rabbi Judah ha-Levi's "Cuzari" is based on the religious disputation between Bulan, the king of the Chazars and the rabbi.

Our responsibility in this world

Whether one wishes to admit it or not, in the eyes of the world the State of Israel is the acknowledged representative of world Jewry. Those anti-Semites who are reluctant to "come out of the closet" with virulent anti-Jewish sentiments redirect their antagonism from Jews to the Jewish State, and the code words are understood by their fellow anti-Semites.

As the recognized representative of the Jewish nation, the Medina's present interaction with the gentile world is political and financial. The action is being played out in political arenas, i.e. the United Nations, Washington, the EU and in the political mass media.

They judge us by our conduct in the liberated areas of Judea, Samaria and the Golan, as viewed according to their interpretation of International law and agreements.

The Medina's present political and financial interaction with

the gentile world is a total distortion of why HaShem has placed us in this world!

Our fathers: Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov were not the Creator's ambassadors to function under the jurisdiction of man-made international rules. Our fathers were spiritual individuals whose roles in history, and thereafter to their descendants, was to meet the gentile not in the political arena but on the spiritual platform of monotheistic thought and morality. It is the Jewish mission to forge humanity into one-world of □□□ □□□□□ – under the Kingdom of Heaven.

How are we to achieve our stated goal of □□□ □□□□□ when HaShem is not part of the discourse between the Jewish State and the world's nations?

If we are to advance to a one-world under the rule of HaShem we must wean away our orientation to the gentile world from political and economics to a meeting ground based on spirituality.

To this end, I suggest that the Chief Rabbinate gather our renowned scholars, well versed in Torah and in the classic sources and philosophies of Christianity and Islam, and invite the leading gentile religious leaders to religious disputations in the holy city of Yerushalayim. To which they would be hard pressed to refuse, especially when we promise that in contrast to our past history, no harm will come to them.

This would be a reversal of the religious disputations initiated and forced upon us by the gentiles throughout the ages.

We would invite the Papal representatives in Israel and beyond as well as Islamic scholars, to open public discussion on the validity of their beliefs. While keeping in mind the prophetic words of Yirmiyahu chapter 16,19-20:

– it could move great numbers of humanity to consider Judaism, the mother of all religions. This, in turn, could create an avalanche of interest among the gentiles which would require us to educate the gentiles on a mass scale in the Seven Noachide mitzvot.

A great leap towards our goal of leading the world to □□□□□□□□ as we say three times a day in the Aleinu prayer:

“It is our duty to praise the Master of all, to acclaim the greatness of the One who forms all creation. For God did not make us like the nations of other lands, and did not make us the same as other families of the Earth. HaShem did not place us in the same situations as others, and our destiny is not the same as anyone else’s.

And we bend our knees, and bow down, and give thanks, before the Ruler, the Ruler of Rulers, the Holy One, Blessed is God.

The One who spread out the heavens, and made the foundations of the Earth, and whose precious dwelling is in the heavens above, and whose powerful Presence is in the highest heights. HaShem is our God, there is none else. Our God is truth, and nothing else compares. As it is written in Your Torah: “And you shall know today, and take to heart, that HaShem is the only God, in the heavens above and on Earth below. There is no other.”

Therefore we put our hope in You, HaShem our God, to soon see the glory of Your strength, to remove all idols from the Earth, and to completely cut off all false gods; to repair the world, Your holy empire. And for all living flesh to call Your name, and for all the wicked of the Earth to turn to You. May all the world’s inhabitants recognize and know that to You every knee must bend and every tongue must swear loyalty. Before You, HaShem our God, may all bow down, and give honor to Your precious name, and may all take upon themselves the yoke of Your rule.

And may You reign over them soon and forever and always. Because all rule is Yours alone, and You will rule in honor forever and ever. As it is written in Your Torah: “HaShem will reign forever and ever.”

And it is said: “HaShem will be Ruler over the whole Earth, and on that day, God will be One, and God’s name will be One.”

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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