

Beshalach 5782

BS"D Parashat Be'shalach 5782

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Who Knows Five?

"Who knows five?" (quote from the Pesach Hagadda).

From a Jewish perspective, how would one define "coincidence"? I suggest that it is HaShem's way of directing the world while remaining anonymous. It's an interesting coincidence (or perhaps not) that cities which brought us bad mazel and bad memories come in groups of five.

1- Five cities in ancient Egypt are mentioned in the Tanach: Noph and Tahpanhes (Yirmiyahu 2,16); Pithom and Raamses (Shmot1,11) and Tzo'an (Bamidbar 13,22). These cities were home to the Jews who eventually, as slaves, very much regretted being there.

2- The five depraved cities in the area of the Dead Sea: Sedom (Sodom), Amora (Gomorra), Admah, Tzvuyim (Zeboim), and Tzo'ar (Bereishiet 14,8). The only Jew (or half Jew) that lived there and escaped by the skin of his teeth was Avraham's nephew Lot with his immediate family. Definitely not a positive environment for a Jew. These cities reveal the depths of organized depravity.

3- The five Philistine cities at the time of the Judges and into the Davidic era: Azza (Gaza), Ascalon (Ashkelon), Ashdod, Gat and Ekron. The Philistines taught us what to expect when large numbers of goyim settle in our land.

4- Closer to our time, there are five European cities which are home to relatively large Jewish populations but will very soon become murderously uninviting (understatement) for a Jew:

London, Paris, Berlin, Warsaw, and Moscow, when their innate Judenhass takes over.

5- This brings to mind another group of five towns, this time in Long Island: Oceanside, Lawrence, Hempstead, Cedarhurst, and Woodmere. According to what I am told, not having been in the States for over 25 years, there is a growing feeling of discomfort bordering on discontent and tending towards fear stemming from the increasing number and severity of antisemitic "incidents" in these places. These towns demonstrate how quickly life can change from satisfaction and material gratification to suspicion and fear.

6- Another group of five US cities: New York, Baltimore, Chicago, Cleveland and Lakewood, which are the homes of leading yeshivot and kollels. It is no secret that the survival of these yeshivot and adjoining communities depends on the degree of patience that the local goyim will have for them. These leading yeshivot should be the first to recognize the need for self-preservation, as stated in the Tanach:

(וְאַתָּה, יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֵלֵינוּ וְאַתָּה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ) אֲנִי אֲנִי

Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves

... and move on to Eretz Yisrael when the winds of hate begin to blow in the galut.

Security in Jewish Communities

Major excerpts from an article by Dan Lavie in the newspaper Israel Hayom entitled:

"The \$54 million program connects Jewish communities to special security network".

“Attempted arson attacks, vandalism, the dissemination of antisemitic materials and packages containing potentially toxic materials are just some of the threats Jews in North America have recently had to face. In response, the community has decided to raise the issue of synagogue security to the forefront of the agenda.”

Not only are institutions vulnerable, but individuals as well are being attacked at a growing rate.

According to Rebecca Caspi, director-general at the Jewish Federations of North America’s Israel branch, antisemitic incidents have now gone beyond online harassment to the point where Jews are the targets of verbal and physical assault..

The Federation serves as an umbrella organization of 146 Jewish federations and 300 Jewish communities across the United States and Canada and decided it would not stand idly by in the face of the violence.

They established the nationally funded “Live Secure” program in partnership with the U.S. Homeland Security Department to provide local federations with the tools, training, and resources needed to keep their summer camps, synagogues, and classrooms safe.”

There are not enough security personnel to protect every institution, not to speak of individual Jews.

“The \$54 million in funding for the program will allow the communities to be connected to a special surveillance and security network that will perform an intelligence assessment of the extent of threats to Jewish community members posed by terrorist and antisemitic organizations, allowing each community to be ranked according to the security threat it faces. In addition, experts will search for gaps in security and work to improve existing security measures.”

Sounds absolutely reassuring!!

“As part of the security upgrade, synagogues will receive closed-circuit security cameras, have secure doors installed, and community members will be trained for potential terrorist threats. Private security guards will also be hired for special events and certain communities.”

Land of the free and home of the brave; free to pass security clearance, and brave enough to come to shul on Shabbat!

“According to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, the number of antisemitic incidents reported in the first half of 2021 was double that reported in the same period the previous year.”

A hundred times more go unreported.

In conclusion: The world is becoming more and more in turmoil due to Covid 19, economic instability, radical political and social movements, fear of China, nuclear proliferation, gender insanity; – and these are on the short list.

HaShem is taking down the galut, albeit slowly and so far with minimal pain.

As I have previously stated, we Jews are geniuses in all walks of life except one – self-preservation!

In our parasha, when the Jews were with their “backs to the wall” (“to the sea wall”), Hashem tells Moshe “Stop praying and become pro-active in saving the nation”.

In our time pro-active is not “boarding up of the 12 beautiful shul windows, or adding security cameras”, but packing your belongings and coming back home!

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

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