

Bo 5775

BS"D Parashat 5775

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The 613 Mitzvot Encapsulated

The gemara (makot 24a) quotes several outstanding Torah personalities in our history regarding how they encapsulated the essence of the 613 mitzvot of the Torah, as befitting the minimal requirements of their particular generation.

King David condensed the essence of the Torah into 11 cardinal principles of conduct, suited for his generation (Tehilim chapter 15):

: צדיק יסודותיו ישרות
: צדיק יסודותיו ישרות
: צדיק יסודותיו ישרות 'ו
: צדיק יסודותיו ישרות

*he who walks in innocence, acts justly,
speaks the truth that is in his heart;
whose tongue utters no slander,
does no evil to his fellow,
casts no shame on one who is close to him
despises a vile person but honors those who fear the Lord;
keeps an oath even when it is to his detriment*

lends money without interest;

does not accept a bribe against the innocent.

The prophet Chabakuk (2,4), believed to have lived towards the end of the first Temple period, condensed the Torah into one single thought:

אֱמוּנָה אֵלֹהִים אֵלֹהִים

The righteous (one) will live by his faith (in HaShem).

Were I asked to encapsulate in one word the most essential task that was placed upon the Jewish people during our 2000 year galut, I would say without hesitation "survival". Both physical and spiritual survival among the gentile nations where we were exiled, scattered like dust and treated as such. The daily torment of "survival" as opposed to our physical and spiritual "thriving" when we are in Eretz Yisrael.

There is to date no absolute scientific proof of the existence of a God; however, our survival and unfathomable return to Eretz Yisrael is empirical proof that not only does HaShem exist, but that He is also a "religious Zionist", as we say in Hallel (Tehilim 118,17):

:אֲנִי אֵלֵךְ וְאֵלֵךְ אֵלֵךְ וְאֵלֵךְ אֵלֵךְ אֵלֵךְ אֵלֵךְ

I will not die, but will live, and proclaim the actions of HaShem

The Irrational, Unreasonable Foolhardy Survivors

HaShem chose Moshe Rabbeinu as the “mission head” to revert our ancestors’ dispirited mental state of mere “survival” impelled by 210 years of being downtrodden slaves, back to their normative, aristocratic status as the children of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya’akov.

Moshe was the original “I have a dream” person. But, even more. He was sent to make the “dream” real in a very short period of time. It occurred when Moshe received the Torah for the Jewish nation at Mount Sinai, only 50 days after the Exodus. This was an extra-ordinary feat. Observe people around the world who went through the slave experience, the vast majority of whom have not been able to shed its dire consequences. Whereas, the Jewish nation when receiving the Torah was transformed immediately into God’s chosen nation.

However, as great as the “dream” was, Moshe’s efforts were conditioned upon the cooperation of those Jews who yearned to be free, and would be willing to sacrifice for the cause.

During the last days in Egypt, Moshe set forth the route which the Jewish people were to take. It would begin in the treacherous and forbidding Sinai Desert and end when they would arrive in the Holy Land. The nation was told that they were going to depart from Egypt and its misery at the crack of dawn, leaving no time to prepare food or drink as they entered the desert.

However, when Moshe’s strategy was revealed, dissidents appeared and declared an alternative plan for the freed slaves, in view of the fact that the Egyptian nation lay at the feet of their former slaves. The tide had turned; now the Jews were the masters of Egypt, so the logical alternative plan was to remain in Egypt as the new sovereigns over the

land.

Indeed, logic was with the dissidents. "To enter the desert without due preparation was madness", they claimed. Moreover, the nation was unprepared for the great spiritual transformation that Moshe was referring to. The dissidents believed that it was necessary to first create a holy people in the spirit of King David, who said, as above:

to walk in innocence and act justly, speak the truth, with no slander, do no evil to one's fellow man, cast no shame on others, despise a vile person but honor those who fear the Lord; keep an oath even when it is to his detriment, lend money without interest; not to accept a bribe

Then, and only then, would the nation be in a position to receive the Torah and become Hashem's chosen people.

However, HaShem saw it differently. Not the idealization of society as viewed by David, but rather the mysterious, unexplainable, internal spiritual attraction between Am Yisrael and the Creator, as stated by the prophet Chabakuk:

אִישׁ כִּי אֵלֵינוּ יִשְׁתָּחֶוּת וְלֹא יִשְׁתָּחֶוּת לְאֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים

The righteous (one) will live by his faith (in HaShem).

The rebels captured the hearts of 80% of the Jewish people; and they all perished during the week-long plague of darkness.

Rashi, in our parasha (10,22), describes in the severest of terms those who refused to put their faith in Moshe's message as "resha'im" – evil doers. The 80% were killed during the plague of darkness, so that the Egyptians would not see that even Jews were dying and would draw the wrong conclusions.

We, today, are the survivors of the "irrational, unreasonable foolhardy" 20% who chose to commit themselves, their wives and children to their faith in HaShem, in the best tradition of

our forefathers Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov.

Choosing the Rational Road

The Jews in galut today are being challenged as were the Jews in our parasha – to leave for Eretz Yisrael in faith and belief that HaShem will protect them, or take the rational road and remain in the “safety” and “prosperity” of Europe, the United States,++ etc.

History has recorded the tragic results of the rationalist camp of whom not a remnant remains, as opposed to the blind faith of the 20% from whom the Jews of today have come.

The conclusion which I draw from the demise of the 80% of our brothers and sisters who died when they refused to leave Egypt for reasons they believed were for the spiritual welfare of the Jewish people, is that HaShem has little patience for people who are more “frum” than He.

This is the basis for the sacrifices brought by a nazir (nazarite) for prohibiting for himself things which HaShem permits.

When HaShem opens the gates of Eretz Yisrael to His children, there is no room for “erudite” pulpilistic claims that one need not enter those gates.

As in the words of the Hagadda regarding the rasha (evil son): “Had he lived then, he would not have left Egypt”.

Shabbat Shalom,

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