

BS"D Book & Parashat of Vayikra 5783

The Parsha and Current Events: A Spirit of Teshuva

Introduction: My feelings towards Jews who have thrown off the mantle of Torah observance.

The Gemara (Brachot 10a) relates an incident in the life of the illustrious Tana Rabbi Meir, who to his great chagrin had to endure bad neighbors. His wife, the learned Bruriah, daughter of the illustrious Tana R. Chananiah ben Teradion overheard R. Meir pray that HaShem should take these criminals away from the world. Bruriah voiced her displeasure and said to her husband:

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On what do you base your right to curse these people with death? Was it the verse in Tehillim 104:35?

Let sins be consumed from the earth, and the wicked be no more.

If so you are mistaken: the verse does not say let the sinners be consumed from the earth, but rather let the sins

be consumed and when that happens there will no more wicked.

Rabbi Meir accepted his wife's comment, then prayed to HaShem to bring about a spirit of teshuva to these people, and indeed they repented.

I am a melamed (a teacher), not a prosecutor nor a judge. It is not my mission to condemn individuals whose spirituality leaves much to be desired, especially when I too am far from perfect. Moreso, in our generation, when the wounds of the Shoah are still fresh and hurting, hanging heavily over our consciousness with its overwhelming spiritual questions for which we have no answers, except faith. So, every Jew who still identifies as such, even if he is lax in the performance of mitzvot, surely has a pure Jewish soul.

When one comes to me for a bracha (Kohanic blessing) I do so, but strongly suggest that they connect with a man or woman who has a number branded on their arm. They are the righteous of our generation; the Jews who still bond with Judaism despite having experienced Gehennom on earth. Their brachot are the most meaningful.

I have little patience with sins but try to understand the sinner. I give each one the benefit of the doubt and ask myself if I were in his or her position would I do better? Especially my brothers and sisters in partnership in Eretz Yisrael in restoring the grandeur that was Yisrael before our exile.

Freedom

Rambam (Maimonides) has stated that "the world follows its normal course", meaning the world functions according to the

constant, unchanging, fixed laws of nature; so even a “miracle” can be understood to be a result from some natural phenomena. If so, what is a “miracle”?

I suggest that the miracle part is in HaShem’s perfect timing when, at the moment of creation, He set the historical alarm clocks to ring at exactly the precise moments they were needed.

One can explain the splitting of the Red Sea as the result of powerful winds or underground turbulence etc., but the reason we say Hallel is that HaShem brought it about exactly at the time it was needed. So too, when we bombed the nuclear reactor in Baghdad without losing a pilot or a plane, it became known later that their radar system was inoperative for a short period right before the attack. Or the Egyptian pilots who slept late that morning after indulging in a merry party the night before.

Where can we see the hand of HaShem at work in what is now occurring in Israel, with the rioters taking to the streets chanting freedom for fear that the present right wing-religious government will encroach on their personal liberties?

Answer: again, it’s all in the timing, that serves to remind us who we are.

“Freedom! Democracy! Freedom not dictatorship!”, they scream freedom at this time in the year when Am Yisrael is celebrating the holiday of freedom – Pesach, when HaShem conducted the exodus of our nation from Egyptian servitude.

However, the manner and understanding of the way that God-fearing Jews define freedom is poles apart from the way secular demonstrators define it.

The seculars are clamoring for freedom to live like goyim. To eat what they want, whenever they want. The freedom to travel

unchained 24/7; the freedom for gender preference; the freedom to marry whomever they wish without a thought as to the outcome of their relationships. The freedom to go out in the public domain dressed or not dressed as they feel, and the freedom to feel embarrassed when seeing a religious Jew who reminds them of their grandparents who sacrificed so much to defend their status as HaShem's chosen people.

We, on the other hand, who give body and soul to defend our divine mission to keep the Torah, define freedom differently. The holiday of Pesach was not freedom from slavery; rather it was a transition from one master to another.

Three sources:

1- This is very subtly transmitted in the Torah which begins the list of laws in the first parasha Mishpatim following the revelation at Mount Sinai, with laws pertaining to avadim (indentured servants).

2- In addition HaShem says in Vayikra 25,55:

וְהָיְתָה לָכֵן לְךָ מִשְׁפָּחָה בְּמִצְרָיִם וְעַבְדֵי בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה וְלֹא עַבְדֵי בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֵלֶיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי יֵצֵאוּ מֵעֵבֶר וְלֹא יִשְׂרָאֵל עַבְדֵי בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה וְעַבְדֵי בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֵלֶיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי יֵצֵאוּ מֵעֵבֶר

The Children of Israel are My servants. They are My servants whom I have taken out of the land of Egypt. I am the lord your God.

3- The greatest accolade that could be given to Moshe is in the Book of Yehoshua chapter one:

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלֶיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֵלֶיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַבְדֵי בָרוּךְ יְהוָה אֵלֶיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי יֵצֵאוּ מֵעֵבֶר וְלֹא יִשְׂרָאֵל עַבְדֵי בָרוּךְ יְהוָה אֵלֶיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי יֵצֵאוּ מֵעֵבֶר
וְלֹא יִשְׂרָאֵל עַבְדֵי בָרוּךְ יְהוָה אֵלֶיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי יֵצֵאוּ מֵעֵבֶר וְלֹא יִשְׂרָאֵל עַבְדֵי בָרוּךְ יְהוָה אֵלֶיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי יֵצֵאוּ מֵעֵבֶר

וַיָּבֵר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן נֹון אֲמָר וְעַתָּה הִנֵּה אֲנִי מֵת וְאַתָּה עֹמֵד עַל הַיַּרְדֵּן וְעָבְרָה אֶת הַיַּרְדֵּן אַתָּה וְכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעָבְרָה אֶת הַיַּרְדֵּן אַתָּה וְכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעָבְרָה אֶת הַיַּרְדֵּן אַתָּה וְכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל

And it came to pass, after the death of Moshe, servant of HaShem, and Hashem spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses's attendant, saying,

Moshe My servant is dead. Now proceed to cross the Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the Israelites.

We are not free; we live by the dictates of the Creator who has chosen us to be His messengers in this world. However, we, the servants of HaShem, are the most free people. We can enter the palace of the King at will, whenever we pray or learn Torah. The secular Jews now clamoring for the freedom that comes with democracy are bound with chains that deprive them of entering the spiritual bond that HaShem initiated with Am Yisrael.

Deliverance will come.

We are alarmed at the threats of some veteran pilots to refuse to volunteer for duty as necessary reserve pilots because of their opposition to the right-wing religious government. They have the right to choose to serve or not to serve as reserve pilots. But if you will not serve, then the moral thing to do is to leave the country rather than stand to the side looking upwards and waving at your more loyal comrades, while your abilities are needed in the defense of the nation.

My answer to them is in the Book of Shoftim (Judges), the episode of Gideon.

Gideon gathered 32,000 soldiers from the tribes of Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, as well as his own tribe Manasseh, to fight the armies of Midian and Amalek.

HaShem appeared to Gideon informing him that the men he had gathered were too many, and as such the people would claim the victory as their own, rather than a miracle of HaShem. Gideon was instructed to send home those men who were afraid, and 22,000 returned with 10,000 remaining.

HaShem then told Gideon that there were still too many and instructed Gideon to bring the men to the river to drink and send home those who bowed down to drink, as well as those who lapped directly from the water "like a dog". At the end of the process only 300 men, who had cupped the water with their hands to drink, were allowed to remain.

The rest is Biblical fact. Gideon and his small band of fighters defeated the overwhelming number of enemy soldiers, and HaShem was praised for again having saved the Jewish people.

If this is the value of the Medina in the eyes of these men who refuse to serve, then we can say to them what Mordechai said to Esther when she was apprehensive about appearing before Achashverosh to save her people (Esther 4,14):

אם אדם יתעורר ויגיד את האמת ויגיד את המצוינות
...אם אדם יתעורר ויגיד את האמת ויגיד את המצוינות

If you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place.

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

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