

BS"D Parashat KI TAVO 5783

Hungry for geula?

It is to my religious brothers and sisters still stuck in the galut that I dedicate the following story:

It came to pass that the Shamas in a little shtetl fell ill and the Shamas'te (his wife) fulfilled his communal obligations to the best of her ability. Among them was on the week preceding Rosh HaShana to waken the good people of the shtetl in the wee hours of the morning to gather together at the bet kneset to recite Selichot (prayers for forgiveness).

At 4 AM on day one, the Shamas'te took the little metal gavel used for the task and set off to awaken the dedicated, idealistic, religious men of the community.

In the first house adjacent to the Shamas lived a man whose name was Binyamin but was called "Binyamin Apikores" (Binyamin the Apostate), who due to the circumstances of his childhood and youth was unable to learn Torah but was very proud of his Judaism and was making strides towards the Torah.

At the knock of the gavel, Binyamin called out to ask who was at the door. The Shamas'te identified herself and called "shtay uf far slichas" – get up for Selichot". Binyamin Apikores, despite all his shortcomings, was a compassionate man. He opened the door letting in the freezing cold wind and snow and said to the Shamas'te, "It is three o'clock in the

morning, the snow is piled up and you are not in the best of health. Give me the gavel and go home; I will wake up the people for Selichot".

The Shamas'te went home, and Binyamin Apikores proceeded to the next house.

At the sound of the gavel, the baal habayit asked who was there. Binyamin Apikores identified himself and that he had come to awaken all the ba'alei hatim to Selichot.

At that moment, there came a loud angry cry from within the house, "You have the audacity, Binyamin Apikores to waken me for your Selichot. You are nothing but an apikores while I am a God-fearing man – I will not lower myself to answer the call to your Selichot".

The scenario repeated itself in every house in the shtetl, to such an extent that at the beginning of the davening only two people showed up – the rav who comes early to shul every day of the year and Binyamin Apikores.

Now! About 130 years ago, a man detached from Torah observance by the name of Binyamin Ze'ev Herzl picked up a big hammer and organized the Zionist Movement to arouse the Jewish people to the need of a Jewish national state and facilitate its establishment in Eretz Yisrael.

He was rejected by the main body of religious leadership who said, "Who are you, Apikores, to tell us about Eretz Yisrael? We will not come to your Eretz Yisrael".

So, at the end of the day who came? Socialist and Communist apikorsim and a thin sliver of yiray Shamayim (God-fearing), and it was they who forged a Medina from out of a malarial swampland and barren wilderness.

How awesome the fact that the first official law passed by the new Medina in 1948 was the Law of Return, to absorb the surviving descendants of those who refused to come to the land of Binyamin Apikores.

Medinat Yisrael with all its amazing achievements and failings does not belong to Binyamin Apikores, nor to the eldest Tzaddik of the generation. The Medina belongs to all of Am Yisrael who live here and love her.

Binyamin Herzl was the great Jewish engineer. He, like other engineers whose task is to turn architectural plans into a workable blueprint, transformed the tens or hundreds of millions of heartfelt prayers of over 2000 years into a workable goal of Jewish nationhood in our ancient homeland.

As we recite at the Pesach seder:

לֵאמֹר כִּי כָל הָעָם הָאֵלֶּה הָיוּ עֲבָדִים לְפָרֶעְהוֹ
”וְכָל הָעָם הָאֵלֶּה הָיוּ עֲבָדִים לְפָרֶעְהוֹ”

All who are hungry come and eat, all who are needy come and partake in the korban Pesach.

And I say: All who are hungry for geula (redemption) come home to Eretz Yisrael; all who feel the need to be close to HaShem come and dwell in the holy land.

But when one does not come, it means that he doesn't feel the need. And that is very tragic!

Shame and blame

There is a saying: The first time Johnny calls you “dirty Jew” – shame on Johnny; the second time – shame on You!!

Human beings without Torah are summarized in Bereishiet chap. 8:

וְיִצְחָק יָרָא וַיִּשְׁמַח וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֵלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֵלֹהִים

Inclinations of the human heart are evil from birth.

In the 1930's who could have comprehended the extent of evil in the hearts of European Christians: gas chambers, crematoria, mass murder, engineered killings? But now we know that Christianity not only did not have the moral energy to prevent the Shoah, but the contrary, the Shoah became a reality only on the platform of Christianity.

The first time the descendants of Aisav released their evil inclinations on Ya'akov, shame on the Germans, French, Italians, Russians, the British etc., from Portugal in the west to the Russian borders with Asia. But if the Jews in the galut again fall prey to the savagery of anti-Semitism – shame on the Jews.

As Rosh Hashana approaches let me state: if you have grievances or bear resentment because the situation in Eretz Yisrael is not the way you would have it, the address is not the secular members of the government, but the hundreds of thousands of our Bnei Torah and religious brothers and sisters who do not come on aliya – who by their sheer numbers could bring about the necessary changes.

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

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