

BS"D Parashat Ki Tavo 5785

The US Department of War

PART ONE

Am Yisrael, and specifically we who are granted the privilege to live in Eretz Yisrael, are in the midst of a kaleidoscope of events. Before we can decipher the implications of yesterday's event, the next one comes to expropriate our attention.

Just this week, six holy Jews were murdered in Yerushalayim, four holy soldiers were killed in a tank in Gaza, and one holy police officer was killed in the line of duty. Then there was the assassination of the unholy Hamas leaders who, from their safe five-star hotel haven in Qatar, were pulling the strings of the demented marionettes living and dying in Gaza. Adding to the list of current events, France's political leadership – who are the leading proponents calling for a Palestinian state and condemning Israel for genocide – collapsed by an overwhelming majority no-confidence vote in their National Assembly. And then there is the gnawing issue of a segment of observant Jews who refuse to be recruited as soldiers during this dangerous time in our history.

There are so many issues that can be discussed, especially before the Days of Awe, that I am hard pressed to decide where to begin. So, I will choose the current event that is, in my opinion, most relevant to many Jews. I would describe it in one word – War.

A seemingly irrelevant US presidential act changing the name of the Department of Defense to the Department of War is not simply an administrative correction to Washingtonian

stationery. This change will impact the lives of millions of Americans and create worldwide aftershocks.

What led President Trump to make this change?

Notwithstanding the fact that the US military is currently stronger and better equipped than the Chinese, China's military potential far surpasses that of the US.

While the US population numbers more than 341 million, China has 1.5 billion.

So, theoretically, if the US and China would lose the same number of people in a war, the Chinese would still have over one billion people.

Active personnel in the US military number 1.3 million, while China has approximately 2 million. Even more astounding – the number of young people in the US reaching military age is 4.5 million versus 20 million in China.

Last week, China staged a military parade to celebrate 80 years since the end of World War Two. The impressive parade included tens if not hundreds of thousands of soldiers marching as one man.

We saw it on TV, and so did President Trump and the Pentagon generals.

In addition, Russia remains a real and growing threat to the Nato members – including the US.

In order for the US to effectively double its active forces, it will be forced to reinstitute the military draft in place of the very expensive volunteer system.

I foresee a surprise announcement: "Last night at 12 midnight, the President signed into law the restoration of the military draft". From that moment on, all eligible manpower from ages 14 to 28 will be prohibited from leaving the country or from

being issued a passport.

Your holy sons and daughters will serve in the military for not less than 3 years, as expected from a faithful citizen. And by the time of their release, most of them will not care about learning Torah in Eretz Yisrael or about keeping Shabbat.

The choice is yours. I don't have to spell it out.

PART TWO

The story of Binyamin Apikoris

It is to my religious brothers and sisters who are 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 that, on the week preceding Rosh Hashana, she would awaken the good people of the shtetl in the wee hours of the morning to gather together at the shul 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 God-fearing, dedicated and idealistic men of the community.

In the first house adjacent to the shamas lived a man whose given name was Binyamin. However, he was known as "Binyamin Apikoris" (Binyamin the Apostate) because, due to the circumstances of his childhood and youth, he was not able to learn Torah. Despite this fact, Binyamin was very proud of his Judaism and was making strides in learning the Torah.

At the knock of the gavel, Binyamin Apikoris called out to ask who was at the door. The shamas'te identified herself and

called "shtay uf far slichas" – get up for selichot". Despite all his shortcomings, he was a compassionate man. He opened the door, letting in the freezing cold wind and snow and said to the shamas'te, "It is 4 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 selichos".

The shamas'te went home, and Binyamin Apikoris proceeded to the next house.

At the sound of the gavel, the next baal habayit asked who was there. Binyamin Apikoris identified himself and said that he had come to waken all the ba'alei batim to selichot.

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

The scene 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 came early to shul every day of the year and Binyamin Apikoris.

"So, what is the connection?" you ask.

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

He was rejected by the main body of religious leadership who said, "Who are you, Apikoris, 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 God-fearing Jews. It was they

who forged a Medina out of a malarial swampland and barren wilderness.

How awesome it is that the first official law passed by the new Medina in 1948 was the Law of Return, allowing for the absorption of the surviving descendants of those who had refused to come to the land of Binyamin Apikoris.

Medinat Yisrael, with all its amazing achievements and failings, neither belongs to Binyamin Apikoris nor to the greatest tzaddik of the generation. The Medina belongs to all of Am Yisrael who live here and love her.

Binyamin (Theodore) Herzl was one of the great Jewish engineers who, like his peers, turned architectural plans into a workable blueprint. He transformed the millions of heartfelt prayers of over 2000 years into a workable goal of Jewish nationhood in our ancient homeland.

We recite at the Pesach seder

[illegible]

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.

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

Bearing Shame

There is a saying that the first time Johnny calls you “dirty

Jew", shame on Johnny. The second time, shame on you!

Human beings without Torah are summarized in Bereisheit, Chapter 8:

הַיָּדְיוֹן הַזֶּה הוּא הַיָּסוֹד לְכָל הַדִּבְרֵי הַתּוֹרָה

The inclination of the human heart is evil from birth.

In the 1930's, who could have fathomed the extent of evil in the hearts of European Christians: gas chambers, crematoria, mass murder, engineered killings?

Now we know that Christianity did not have the moral fortitude to prevent the Shoah. On the contrary, **the Shoah became a reality only on the platform of Christianity.**

The first time the descendants of Esav (populating all of Europe from the west to the Soviet Union in the east) released their evil inclinations on Ya'akov, shame on them. However, 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 that 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. It is with the hundreds of thousands of our religious leaders and religious brothers and sisters who do not come on Aliya. By their sheer numbers, they could bring about the necessary changes.

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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