

BS"D Parashat Matot 5782

Will You Stay, or Will You Go?

Almost all conscious Jews ask themselves what does HaShem have in store for His people? And we can add, what does this have to do with parashat Matot?

I submit:

Firstly, we have to be aware that the Creator is neither timid nor shy. As the ultimate being, He does not have to answer to anyone.

When Adam and Chava sinned in Gan Eden, HaShem declared that from that time on all living entities including humans would ultimately die. HaShem certainly gave thought to the implications that the sin of one man and one woman would cause the death of billions of human beings yet to be born.

When the generation of Noach crossed the red line of misconduct, HaShem did not hesitate to destroy all the flora, fauna, and mankind, saving but a minute remnant for future sinning.

HaShem did not hesitate to destroy the flourishing societies of Sodom and Amora and their three sister cities, after examining their perverted legal systems.

HaShem did not waver before the millions of Egyptian firstborn and heads of families, when He sent the Angel of death to their homes; nor did He hesitate to crash down the thrashing waters of the Red Sea on the army of Paro.

HaShem showed no favoritism to the sinner when He destroyed

the generation of Jews who joined with the Meraglim (scouts) who refused to enter the holy land of Eretz Yisrael.

After stretching the *midat harachamim* (the quality of mercy) to its elastic limits, HaShem destroyed the two Ba'tai Mikdash (Temples) and exiled His sons and daughters to the four corners of the planet.

HaShem is righteous and merciful in all He does, but history has proven that there are limits to His patience.

With our ability to review Jewish history, with all its convolutions and contradictions, we can say in hindsight that a process of spiritual winnowing has always been in effect. The object of this filtering is that at a precise time known only to HaShem, He will have before Him a generation of the 'spiritually fittest', which will be capable of fulfilling the purpose for which He created the world.

Assimilation through inter-marriage is a major part of this process. Was the Shoah with its over seven million (latest estimate) murdered Jews part of the filtering process? I don't know!

A major stage of this pruning process of the spiritually fittest is the decision to leave the galut of one's birth and return home to our land, albeit beset with difficulties and threatened by enemies.

But the process does not stop at the doorstep of Eretz Yisrael. It continues even here. The Hebrew word for one who leaves the land is *yored* (one who has descended), when in reality the appropriate word is *murad* (one who was taken down), in keeping with HaShem's process of screening.

Events of the near future will create an environment of apprehension bordering on trepidation. All those who do not possess an irrational love for Eretz Yisrael will find reason to leave. The 350,000 non-Jews who entered the country from

eastern Europe under the absurd Law of Return, will return to Russia and elsewhere.

Arabs who value their lives will run away, as they did in 1948.

Many bnei Torah will leave because the tension will interfere with their learning. I was witness to this phenomena during the three-week period prior to the Six Day War while living in Kiryat Sanz, in Netanya, when taxi after taxi would drive up to whisk families away to the safety of the land of the upheld torch, beckoning to all who are afraid and "yearning (earning) to be free".

Those who will merit to remain and be partners in HaShem's greatest miracles are those who have within them the gift of courage and idealism forged through 3500 years of Jewish experience.

This is what incited Moshe Rabbeinu's wrath toward the tribes of Reuven and Gad when they requested that their homestead be in the eastern side of the Jordan River. The eastern side is as much a part of Eretz Yisrael as is the western side, but a bit inferior with regard to certain mitzvot. Indeed, had Re'uven and Gad requested their homestead in any area of what is today Lebanon, Syria, most of Iraq or the Sinai Peninsula, they would have been in Eretz Yisrael. Moshe's anger was directed at what he thought to be the tribes' reluctance to participate in the military effort to liberate the western side of the river, as he requested from them:

(Bamidbar 32:6)

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-בְּנֵי גָד וְאֶל-בְּנֵי רְעוּבֵן אֲנִי אֹמֵר אֵלֵיכֶם הַיּוֹם
:וַיֹּאמְרוּ

And Moshe said to the children of Gad and to the children of Reuven, "shall your brothers go out to war and you will stay here?!"

Moshe then made the fulfillment of their request dependent on the condition that they serve as the first line fighters in the battles to liberate the western side.

This is the criterion for the future. Those who endanger themselves for the good of the nation will merit to inherit the land. Those who circumvent and elude their responsibilities will be expelled and not permitted to share in the future.

We human beings, whose lives are as long as a fleeting bird or the wisp of a cloud, may say to ourselves, "Yesterday was a bad day, tomorrow will be better." We can even say, "Last week was not so good, next week will be better." But no rational person would say seriously, "The past 10 years were not so good, the next 10 years will be better". However, HaShem who according to the Zohar, creates and destroys universes says, "this generation is not up to par, the next one will be better."

This is the reality we see in our lives – a winnowing of people and generations, until the appropriate one is born.

The right generation is the one that is comprised of People who feel great love and gratitude to HaShem, to His Torah, and mitzvot. People dedicated to settling the land, of integrity and righteousness whose love of fellow Jews is unquestionable. People who are willing even to give their lives for the integrity of HaShem's promise that this land belongs to the sons and daughters of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov. People who stand up at the sound of the siren on our holy soldiers' Memorial Day and visit the military cemeteries to say kaddish and reunite with the memories of fathers, brothers, sons, uncles and brothers who gave their lives.

Look around. You will see them with their knitted kipot, with M16s over their shoulders, returning at night from a shiur by the rosh yeshiva, who also happens to be a senior officer in

Tzahal.

Rarely, if ever, has the Jewish nation brought forth a quality generation like this. Sons and daughters who, after 2000 years of galut and the unspeakable Shoah, declare in word and deed, that whatever HaShem, in His unbounded wisdom brings upon us, their faith in the avowed destiny of our nation, as expressed by the holy prophets, will never be in doubt.

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

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