

BS"D Parashat Nitzavim-Vayelech 5784

The final Shabbat of 5784

A *meisa* (story) for Rosh HaShana

Now, it came to pass that the shammes (sexton) in a little shtetel passed away leaving an elderly widow. The community volunteered to support her, but she refused to take a "hand out." So, an agreement was reached whereby she would receive a good wage for doing her diseased husband's job of awaking the town's people for slichas (selichot: daily early-morning prayers recited before Rosh Hashana).

She was given the wooden gavel used for the task and set off at three in the morning to awaken the men of the community for slichas.

In this town lived a man who was called "Binyamin Apikores" (Binyamin the scoffer), because once thirty years ago on Rosh HaShana he did not participate in reciting tashlich (custom of casting off one's sins). The first house that the shamesta arrived at was occupied by Binyamin Apikores. At the knock of the gavel, Binyamin called out to ask who was at the door. The shamesta identified herself and called "shtay uf far slichas" – "get up for slichas". Binyamin, despite all his shortcomings, was a compassionate man. He then said to the shamesta, "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 slichas."

The shamesta went home, and Binyamin Apikores took the gavel and proceeded to the next house. At the sound of the gavel, a voice called out asking who was there. Binyamin Apikores answered that it was he coming to awaken every Jew in the town to slichas.

At that moment, the man in the house shouted, "You have the audacity, Binyamin Apikores, to waken me for slichas? You are nothing but an apikores (scoffer), and I am a God-fearing man. I will not lower myself to answer your call to slichas."

This scenario repeated itself in every house in the shtetel; so much so that, at the beginning of the davening, only two people showed up – the rabbi and Binyamin.

About 130 years ago, a non-observant Jew by the name of Binyamin (Theodore) Herzl organized the Zionist Movement to arouse the Jewish people to return home and establish a national State of our own.

He was rejected by the main body of religious Jewish 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? Non-observant Zionists and a paltry number of *yiray shamayim* (God-fearing Jews) who remained part of the Zionist Movement.

This distorted view of Jewish history is rife to this very

day. Too many wonderful *frum* Jews are living abroad because their rabbi said, “Don’t go to *Eretz Yisrael*. Here in Boro Park and Eastern Parkway, it is easier to educate your children. Here we have no army service, no economic crisis, no *chilul Shabbas*!”

Israel is a democracy, and numbers decide the way the land will be governed. If only a percentage of our *frum* brothers and sisters would break away from the spiritual paralysis imposed upon them by myopic leaders and come up to *Eretz Yisrael*, we could turn our society around in one or two generations. And by rebuilding the land, we would rebuild ourselves as HaShem’s chosen people.

There is still so much to be accomplished. HaShem drew the minimum borders of the land to be from the River Prat (Euphrates) until the Nile. The Syrians, Jordanians, Lebanese and Egyptians in the Sinai Peninsula are all occupiers of our holy soil. We have much to do!

No one knows what the future holds, but one thing is certain. Eventually, the “*apikorsim*” in *Eretz Yisrael* – they or their children – will return to the *Torah*. The signs are out there. After 120 years of life, when the big question is asked of every individual Jew “*tze’pee’ta leyshua?*” (did you actively anticipate My salvation?), we will proudly affirm, “Yes, we were the ones who paved the way for Your return to *Am Yisrael*.

The coming year of 5785 will be a crucial one for all Jews. Make no mistake about it. We will defeat all our enemies to the amazement and dismay of the world. Our status of “chosen people” will advance before the enlightened family of nations.

Iran Plans, HaShem Intervenes

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Our Father, our King, annul the (evil) intentions of our enemies

In our world, the good and the bad, the sweet and the bitter are often so intertwined that the majority of people who are intellectually and emotionally myopic cannot see the forest because of the trees. The grief and pain caused by the death of our soldiers, by the savage slaughter of our fellow Jews, and by those taken hostage almost a year ago on Shemini Atzeret shroud HaShem's ongoing miracles which saved the other seven million Israelis and the Jewish State.

We uncovered a plan designed by Iran and agreed upon by the Arabs in Gaza to the south, in Lebanon to the north, in Judea-Samaria to the east, by the anticipation that the 350,000 Bedouins in the Negev and many of our own Arab Israeli citizens; would attack Israel from three sides at a pre-determined time in order to eliminate the Jewish State and murder its seven million Jews. The plan would have elevated the Arabs to the new title holder – presently held by Germany – of murdering the greatest number of Jews in the shortest period of time.

To this day, it is still unclear why the others did not join in with Hamas. There are theories and speculations of all sorts, but we are the only ones who truly know:

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Our Father, our King, annul the (evil) intentions of our enemies

We have no way of knowing how often HaShem has saved the Jewish people from the vicious plans of Esav and Yishmael,

beginning 3000 years ago when the allegorical "lamb" was surrounded by 70 gentile wolves.

The Prophet Yesayahu (11,6) refers to a time in the future when peace shall reign in the world, and says:

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The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fatted calf together; and a little child shall lead them.

I fully agree and await the fulfillment of the great prophecy with one caveat: that we will become the wolf, the leopard and the lion.

Shabbat Shalom – Ketiva va'chatima tova

Together, with HaShem's help, we shall be victorious

Nachman Kahana

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