

BS"D Parashat Noach 5783

Dramatic Changes in Life

Midrash Raba (Bereishiet page 56):

Noach was one of three men who saw extreme reversals in their lives: from contentment, to disaster, to restoration of contentment. Noach experienced a super advanced society; he then saw it destroyed and eventually rebuilt. According to the Midrash, by the time he died, Noach saw 70 races evolving from his descendants.

E'yov (Job) established his princely, elegant, wealthy family. He then saw the demise of all its members and his fall into dire poverty; followed by his remarriage and restoration of wealth and family.

The prophet Daniel saw the first Bet Hamikdash, its destruction and then the rebuilding of the second Bet Hamikdash by Ezra and Nechemia.

These were remarkable men who merited to see the closing of tragic historic circles by the “hand of HaShem”.

There are many among us today who recall the glory of Torah study and devotion to HaShem in Ashkenazic Eastern Europe and Sephardic North Africa and eastward, prior to the time of the

Shoah. They witnessed the destruction of these Torah oriented communities and their rebirth here in Eretz Yisrael.

Restoration

No one can foresee the details of our future with Iran lurking in the background, and the too many non-Jews in our country, and the spread of world-wide anti-Semitism even in liberal democratic nations; but one thing is certain – we will merit to create another Torah centered society here in Israel again.

Those of us who have had the privilege of serving in active-duty units in Tzahal will recall the back-breaking training marches while carrying heavy stretchers on our shoulders, often in deep sand.

Judaism is the heavy stretcher of history, and the Torah observant are the men and women supporting it from beneath for just one more kilometer and just one more; for just one more generation and then another, until we shall be able to rest our weary bodies and sooth the bruises on our backs when the Bet Hamikdash will be rebuilt.

The Torah observant in the holy land with their families of 5-10 (or more) children and many grandchildren and many, many great-grandchildren to the exclusion of the 2-3 children of non-religious families of the Jews in the galut who could be coming on aliyah but refuse to do so – we in the holy land are beneath that stretcher as HaShem's chosen people.

The demographic problem of the minuscule Jewish nation after 3300 years can readily be understood from one sad statistic. We number today only about 12-13 million Jews world-wide; taking into account that any number of American Jews counted in the census statistics half of them, if not more, are not - halachic Jews. They include reform conversions and the reform recognition of a child born to a Jewish father and gentile mother as being Jewish.

After nearly 80 years since the end of World War II we are still very far from the number 18 million of Jews who were alive on the day that the war broke out. This is due to the on-going assimilation holocaust among the reform, conservative and unaffiliated Jews in North America which has reached 70-80 percent!

What can we do? This is a catch 22 dilemma.

In truth, the religious leaders of world Jewry should declare this situation as the second Shoah that has occurred to our nation in modern times. To declare these facts without trepidation and embarrassment in an attempt to stem the tsunami of inter-marriage. However, this would present a nasty problem. The gentiles would respond: "Why are our sons and daughters prohibited to you? Are you some kind of master-race?"

The truthful answer would be as in the following parable:

A man once traversed the land in search of absolute truth. He ventured into a faraway town, and as was his habit, asked if anyone there knew the truth of life. A townsman replied that there is a rumor that on the nearby mountain lives a woman who knows the truth. The man ascended the mountain where he saw the ugliest person he had ever seen. Her age could have easily been 100 or 120. Any beauty which might have been hers was long ago lost, and she was a pitiful sight. He asked her if she is the woman who knows the truth. She replied that she is the personification of truth in the world. The young man stayed with her several months enraptured by her wisdom and revelations in every subject. After several months he informed the woman that he must return to civilization. She understood. And this woman despite being the personification of truth requested a favor of the young man, "Please tell the world that I am young and beautiful".

The lesson here is that truth is often viewed as being too

ugly and stringent for most people to accept, so we prefer to envelop and enshroud it with a cosmetic veneer of falsehood.

To proclaim the situation of intermarriage and assimilation as a Shoah would produce the reaction that we and our religion are racist, and that would open a Pandora's box of active anti-Semitism. So, our leaders prefer to remain silent, and as the proverbial ostrich just stick their heads in the sand.

But, in fact, Judaism is not racist, because we did not proclaim that we are better or that we are the chosen; but it was the Creator Himself who is not part of this world but "out of the box" who made this proclamation. Hence, He is not subject to the rules that govern human behavior. HaShem chose the Jews. So, we should walk with pride and announce we are HaShem's sons and daughters and His loyal subjects. We can find strength and happiness and walk proudly that our souls and bodies are the elite of HaShem's creations. And then let the "chips fall as they may". Because that is the truth!

It is our fervent hope and expectation that just as Noach, E'yov and Daniel merited to see the restoration of their blessings after a period of disaster, that we too, after being the light to the world at the time of King Solomon, then descending to the depths because of our sins, shall in our time merit to see the restoration of Am Yisrael as the recognized spiritual leaders of mankind.

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

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