

BS”D Parashat Pekudai 5784

The King’s Scepter

PART ONE

Book of Esther 4,10-11:

וַיִּשְׁמַע מֶלֶךְ הַמֶּדְיָהּ אֶת-כֹּל אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה אֶת-מֹרְדֵכַי
וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת-הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת-בִּנְיָמִן בֶּן-מֵלֵךְ הַמֶּדְיָהּ
וְאֶת-אֶחָיו אֶת-גִּבְיָהוּן וְאֶת-שֵׁנַי וְאֶת-וִיגַי
וְאֶת-יִשְׁבָּרְבַּד וְאֶת-בְּנֵי-הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת-בְּנֵי-הַמֶּדְיָהּ
וְאֶת-כָּל-עַמְּמֵי-הַמֶּדְיָהּ וְאֶת-כָּל-עַמְּמֵי-הַמֶּלֶךְ
וְאֶת-כָּל-עַמְּמֵי-הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאֶת-כָּל-עַמְּמֵי-הַמֶּלֶךְ
וְאֶת-כָּל-עַמְּמֵי-הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאֶת-כָּל-עַמְּמֵי-הַמֶּלֶךְ
וְאֶת-כָּל-עַמְּמֵי-הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאֶת-כָּל-עַמְּמֵי-הַמֶּלֶךְ

¹⁰ Then she instructed him to say to Mordecai: ¹¹All the King’s officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the King in the inner court without being summoned, the King has but one law: that they be put to death, unless the King extends the gold scepter to them and spares their lives.

And conversely, the King decides when an audience is over and only then may the guest leave.

There are commentators of the Megillah that claim that in many places that have the word melech (king), the literal reference is to Achashverosh and the implied reference is to the King of the Universe – HaShem).

What does it mean in the context of this verse? We shall see later.

B: Once I delivered a shiur (lecture) on the parallel between the three rabbinic enactments of Chanuka, Purim and Tish'a B'Av, and the three Torah festivals of Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot. It was an interesting shiur with practical conclusions for our own times.

But for me, the most meaningful part of the evening occurred at the end, when I opened the floor for questions and comments.

The first to speak was an elderly very alert woman. She asked me with tears in her eyes:

“Ich bin ah poilishe,” (I am from Poland) from a little shtetel (town). Before the German invasion, my father went to our Rav and asked for his blessings because my parents had decided to leave for Eretz Yisrael. But instead of his blessings, the rabbi tried to convince my father not to go to Eretz Yisrael. The following day we left Poland. We are the only survivors of our shtetel. Rav Kahana, explain to me, why did the rabbi tell my father not to go to Eretz Yisrael?”

The tears in her eyes suggested the many relatives and friends who could have come to Eretz Yisrael but stayed in the shtetl, only to be murdered by the Germans.

I answered that, unfortunately, I cannot take away her pain, because I myself do not understand it.

The next speaker was a gentleman whose face was familiar, but I was not able to recall when we last met.

He said that years ago he was in a quandary regarding himself, and I was able to help him resolve the problem. He

related: "I was very far from anything that related to Eretz Yisrael or Judaism. I was an American and had no wish to even visit Israel.

One year my wife nagged me to death (his words) that we should spend Pesach in Eretz Yisrael. I agreed on the condition that after the trip, Israel would be a no-subject in our home. We arrived, and after alighting from the plane and walking several steps a feeling came over me that I never wanted to leave Eretz Yisrael; and very soon after we came on aliya.

I asked several rabbis: what happened to me at that moment? But none were able to give a satisfactory answer until I asked Rav Kahana (me) and he made it very clear. He said that the Hebrew word for coming to Eretz Yisrael is aliya (to ascend), and that word is also used when called to the Torah – to get an aliya.

What is the parallel?

When one is called to the Torah it is not a "free for all", but rather, the gabbai calls you up by your personal name. Likewise, no one comes on aliya until his or her name is called out by HaShem in the Shamayim. Rav Kahana explained to me that HaShem invites people to His palace (the Holy Land) by name, according to the neshama of the person. HaShem knew that my neshama would awaken the moment I walked on the soil of Eretz Yisrael.

I thanked him for reminding me of the incident. I then turned

to the woman "from Poland" who had so tearfully asked about her rabbi and said, "Here is the answer to your question. It is clear that HaShem wanted your family here in Eretz Yisrael and called out their names; the others were not invited."

The principle is that HaShem, as the King of the universe, invites by name those who He wishes to be in His presence, as we saw in the Megillah above. Conversely, one who is invited to a royal audience in Eretz Yisrael does not leave at will but is dismissed or expelled by the King.

C: Harav Hagaon Yitzchak Yosef, the Sephardic Chief Rabbi, said in his Motzei Shabbat lecture this week that if the Knesset passes a law that even serious yeshiva students could be arrested and sentenced to jail for refusing to serve in the military, the students should leave Eretz Yisrael.

My understanding is that the Chief Rabbi did not intend to issue a Halachic decision binding on his adherents, but rather a recommended option until the government changed its policy.

Who am I to get into a debate with the Chief Rabbi and his decisions? But I do have a message for the young men who would exercise the option of leaving the holy land when faced with a draft notice.

In the spirit of what we learned above from the accepted manner that Kings act, take into consideration that no one enters the holy land nor leaves even temporarily on a voluntary basis. One is invited to ascend to it or to be expelled from it by name, which is called out in the Shamayim.

One can relocate to Lakewood etc. and learn Torah in relative tranquility; but your conscience will resonate in a never-ending cadence (rhythm) "you were expelled".

PART TWO

The Chief Rabbi's recommendation for serious learners to leave the country if threatened with a military draft, left an uncomfortable feeling within many people.

But one suggestion was a third alternative – that members of the Knesset's Chareidi parties meet with Arab members to approach Abu Mazzan, head of the PA in Judea and Samaria with a great public relations plan, good for Jews and Arabs alike, and could even pave the way for an Arab state alongside Israel.

That the Arab PA invite young Chareidi kollel couples to cross over to the areas under the PA authority.

The PA would construct a town designed for their needs: large apartments, no city arnona taxes, shuls, mikva'ot, yeshivot and most important, no military draft. There will be kindergartens, elementary schools (chaiderim), and fully paid kollels as long as one wants to learn full time. This way they will be in Eretz Yisrael, not in galut, and enjoy the best of both worlds, including the most modern maternity hospitals.

My reply to this suggestion was:

Let's think how this would play out in reality.

A "kosher" town named "Avraham" after the father of Yitzchak and Yishmael, in the heartland of Eretz Yisrael, 10 kilometers north of Ramallah; a 10-15 minute drive to Yerushalayim.

Five hundred Bnei Torah families with thousands of happy frum children. The PA would be delighted to exhibit that Torah people – not Zionists – can live together in harmony with Moslems, with each free to serve the demands of his faith; proving that the Arabs deserve an independent state between the ocean and the river.

And it came to pass in the fifth year of the town of Avraham, at the close of the Succot festival, that the men, women and children were gathered at night in the various Chassidic and Lithuanian shuls and yeshivot. They came to celebrate the close of the Succot holiday and usher in the holiday of Shemini Atzeret.

Torah Scrolls were removed from the holy arks and distributed in seven waves of dancing and singing.

At 9:00 PM, the assembled dispersed to partake in the festive meals and rest in preparation for the next morning's song and joy-filled prayers, including another round of seven waves of dancing.

At 6:30 AM, men were on their way to the mikveh, when several noticed large groups of Arabs gathered to the east and west of the town. They were joined with more Arabs on motorcycles, and small trucks. Some were seen arriving on airborne gliders and all were carrying weapons. The hired guards of the town summoned the army; but before it could arrive thousands of Arabs had already invaded the town.

They began decapitating and burning and raping.

By the time Tzahal appeared there was a deathly silence in all that had been the holy town of Avraham, with the stench of death pervading every meter.

The few survivors told interrogators that before coming to Avraham they were informed by army intelligence that it would be safe, because what occurred in Azza could not happen in Avraham because the Arabs are panicked and intimidated by the strength of Tzahal.

At this time, the situation in the major cities of Europe and the US was unprecedented. Wherever there were substantial numbers of Moslems, shuls and yeshivot were desecrated with many burned to the ground.

So, if Israel does decide to draft able bodied yeshiva and kollel people, the alternatives would fall by the wayside. And the best of all choices would be to thank HaShem for returning us to Eretz Yisrael, a holy home that we can love and defend in all circumstances.

Shabbat Shalom

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