

BS"D Parashat Pekudai 5785

The war over the soul of our nation

Medinat Yisrael will soon be 77 years young, and religious leaders are still debating the nature of our return to the holy land.

There are great rabbis who are confident, implicit and unwavering in their belief that the Medina is the platform on which the Mashiach will appear. Just count the miraculous victories of our army, and no less the miraculous economic boom that took survivors of the holocaust from the murder camps with only the shirt on their back and their children are CEOs of international companies residing on the 35th floor of a Tel Aviv skyscraper. The extraordinary accomplishments in all fields of endeavor and a very high place in the citizens' satisfaction ladder within the nations.

At the same time there are equally great rabbis who are uncertain and ambivalent as to our link in the golden chain of Jewish history. And yet others who regard the advent of the Medina by mostly non-observant secular Jews (who cherished being Jewish and went to drain the malarial swamps of the Galil) as being illegitimate, and therefore beyond the possibility of rising above their unholy beginnings. Hence it is better to remain in galut until the time when HaShem will send us limousines to come home. Why do I mention limousines?

Once when visiting the States, I was on a subway train when two young Satmar Chassidic men sat next to me. We began talking and at one point I asked them when they would come to

Eretz Yisrael. One answered, “when Hashem sends us limousines”. Our conversation came to an abrupt halt when I said that Chazal teaches that “techiyat hamaytim” (resurrection of the dead) will occur only in Eretz Yisrael, and the righteous in chutz la’aretz will have to make their way through tunnels to get to the land. So what kind of Chassidim are you when your rabbi has to undergo a harsh experience while you will be sitting in a stretch limo! They moved to another seat.

As stated above, there are Torah giants who interpret the events of the past 100 years as the beginning of the Messianic era, and those who do not relate any spiritual significance to the establishment of a Jewish Medina in Eretz Yisrael – and even those who condemn its establishment.

Who is right and who is wrong? At this juncture in our history, nothing less than a clear voice from heaven declaring “I am the Lord your God” will move anyone in each of the three camps to concede to the other’s point of view.

However, there is a fourth approach to the issue; the one I believe unites all the conflicting views.

We here are all in the same “boat”. Because while Eretz Yisrael is inherently kadosh (holy), the political Medinat Yisrael is a neutral entity where Hashem is giving us one more chance to establish a “Kohanic kingdom and holy nation” (Shemot 19,6).

The Medina has within it the greatest potential for sanctity. The land and the very air we breathe abound with kedusha. The Temple Mount, Yerushalayim, Me’arat Ha’Machpela down to the last fistful of soil at the end of the extremities of our borders are all imbued with kedusha. The people from over 100 different lands bring with them a heterogeneity reminiscent of the diversity of the twelve tribes – necessary to bring forth the multifaceted demands of a Torah nation.

In the past, HaShem gave the opportunity to King Chizkiyahu to be the Mashiach, but he faltered. Rabbi Akiva and the majority of rabbis in his day knew that HaShem had given Bar Kochba the opportunity to be the Mashiach, but Bar Kochba also faltered.

In our time, HaShem is giving us another opportunity to bring the final redemption. And as a mother who receives her newborn baby in her arms, the future of the Medina depends on how we relate to it; how we tend and care for it; how we educate our young and with how much zeal we defend it and are willing to die for it.

It is the inescapable duty of every Jew to endeavor to actualize the potential of the Medina to be a God-fearing Torah society in the spirit and words of the prophets. If we fail, then we and Jews the world over will pay dearly. There will not be another exile, but our lives will be filled with challenges.

On the one hand, there are here a small but vocal “eiruv rav” (mixed assembly of people), who has accompanied our people since the time of the Exodus and who wish to destroy any semblance of kedusha in the land. On the other hand, there are the most loyal sons and daughters this nation has ever seen. They learn and live Torah and embrace every centimeter of every hill and valley. They are the kippot sruget (knitted kippot) young men and long-skirted young women who are to be found in every positive aspect of society. They study Torah, settle and build the land, struggle and even die in the effort to convince HaShem that we are ready to establish the Third Jewish Commonwealth in Eretz Yisrael.

In between these two camps is the majority of traditional-minded Israelis together with the Chareidi parties, Chassidic groups, “Lithuanian” yeshivot, and whoever else sees themselves as being Chareidi who flounder without direction.

The Chareidim contribute somewhat to our life here, but they

themselves harbor very little hope that the Medina can turn into an Am Kadosh. They can be compared to a father teaching his little child to walk, but the infant staggers and falls once or twice; and the father throws up his hands in hopelessness while muttering to himself that this child will never walk.

In this war over the soul of our nation, those who remain in chutz la'aretz will have almost zero impact on the outcome of HaShem's great test. Nevertheless, they will be held accountable in the real world for not even taking part in bringing about the final geula for us and for the world.

I hope and pray that I see the day when a "kippa sruga" will sit together with a "shtreimel" wearer in a yeshiva, high atop a hillside overlooking Chevron or Shechem, arguing over the application of a Talmudic principle to the Israeli space station hovering over the planet, or religious scientists designing software applications for the Bet HaMikdash, or three Israeli generals reciting birkat ha'mazon after a working lunch where it was agreed upon to liberate the eastern side of the Jordan river.

It CAN and Will happen, but the timing depends on how much we love HaShem, the Torah, Eretz Yisrael and how much we love each other.

We have no option but to succeed in revealing the hidden sanctity in the inanimate stones of HaShem's holy land and in the deep recesses of our Jewish souls.

In summary: The quantity and quality of HaShem's assistance in advancing our uphill climb to the summit of the Jewish spiritual Mount Everest will be determined by the quantity and quality of Am Yisrael's determination to create here a "Kohanic kingdom and holy nation".

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

Copyright © 5785/2025 Nachman Kahana