

BS"D Parashat Pinchas 5786

Opportunity Missed – Paradise Lost

Last week's message dealt with the apparent phenomena that HaShem built into the basic rules of mankind, that a great man can effectuate a revolutionary change – but HaShem prevents him from creating a second revolutionary change, because more than one is in the sole realm of the Creator Himself.

This message will deal with the man who is privileged by HaShem to lead a daring game-changer in history but falls short of achieving it.

The classic example in our sources was Yeravam ben Navat (Jeroboam I), as recorded in the First Book of Melachim (Kings) and in the Gemara (Sanhedrin 102a). Yeravam, from the tribe of Efraim, was a high-ranking official appointed by King Shlomo to head the entire labor force on the national construction projects in Yerushalayim. However, at some point Yeravam fell out of the King's favor and fled to Egypt.

After Shlomo's death, his prince son Rehavam (Rehoboam) ascended, and Yeravam returned from Egypt. He led a delegation of northern tribes demanding relief from the heavy taxation and forced labor forced upon by King Shlomo. King Rehavam rejected their request, responding with harsh arrogance, and that sparked an immediate revolt. The ten northern tribes seceded from the Davidic dynasty, and crowned Yeravam as the King of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The kingdom lasted over 200 years when in the time of its last king, Hoshea ben Ela, the Assyrians exiled all the Jews.

To solidify his political independence, Yeravam enacted a

prohibition to stop his citizens from traveling south to Yerushalayim and the Bet Hamikdash. He established two local competing sanctuaries: Dan in the far north and Bet'el in the south.

In each location, he set up a golden calf, declaring, "Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."

Biblical history remembers him as the archetype of a king who led his nation astray, by introducing idol worship. Despite Yeravam's sinful influence of his people and on future generations of millions, the Gemara (Sanhedrin 102a) records a remarkable exchange between HaShem and Yeravam, the arch sinner:

:הוֹשִׁיעַ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל מִיַּד הַיָּדָיִם ,וְיִשְׁמְרֵנוּ מִיַּד הַיָּדָיִם אֱלֹהֵינוּ הַיְיָ :הוֹשִׁיעַ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל
- :הוֹשִׁיעַ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל ,וְיִשְׁמְרֵנוּ מִיַּד הַיָּדָיִם אֱלֹהֵינוּ הַיְיָ ,וְיִשְׁמְרֵנוּ מִיַּד הַיָּדָיִם
אֱלֹהֵינוּ הַיְיָ - אֱלֹהֵינוּ הַיְיָ .

Rabbi Abba said: The Holy One, Blessed be He, grabbed Yeravam by his garment and said to him:

"Return from your evil ways, and you (and David) Ben-Yishai and I will walk together in the Garden of Eden (Gan Eden)."

Yeravam, in his great arrogance asked HaShem: "Who will walk at the head?" (Who will lead – David or me?)

HaShem replied: "Ben-Yishai will precede you."

Yeravam responded: "If so, I decline."

Yeravam rejected the ultimate offer that man could entertain – to feel HaShem's closeness in Gan Eden. REMARKABLE!

I wish to bring the story of a contemporary leader, who compared with Yeravam is a super-tzadik, but one who has failed so far, like Yeravam, to respond to an opportunity to

be remembered in Jewish history.

A man who was invited to address countless millions of people, which included four appearances at the US Congress and many more at the UN General Assembly. It is the honorable Prime Minister of our Medina Mr. Binyamin Netanyahu.

He held in his hand opportunities to sanctify HaShem's name more than any other Jew before him – including Moshe Rabbeinu – but each time tripped before crossing the finish-line to greatness.

The gentiles of the world have to learn the simple truth as recorded in the Bible. HaShem, as Creator and Master of all that exists, has the prerogative to choose what is His most desirable creation; much like a great artist who produces exceptional pieces, and when asked which is his personal favorite will point to one which he loves most.

HaShem chose 1- Avraham, and his son 2- Yitzchak and his son 3- Ya'akov and all their descendants until the end of time as His ambassadors to this world, presenting them with their "diplomatic credentials" otherwise called the Torah.

And HaShem chose for His Embassy the land area that connects the three continents of Europe, Asia and Africa, to be called forever Eretz Yisrael.

The promise of the land to us through our forefathers: Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov is a foundational theme in the Bible. It is repeated multiple times, growing more specific in geography and scope throughout Bereisheit (Genesis) and Shemot (Exodus).

Here are the primary Biblical verses where HaShem promises the Holy Land to the Jewish nation:

1- Bereisheit 12:7 when Avraham (then called Avram) first arrives in the land of Canaan at Shechem:

“HaShem appeared to Avram and said, ‘To your offspring I will give this land.’

2- Above 13:14 after Avraham separates from his nephew Lot:

“HaShem said to Avram... ‘Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward, for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever.’”

3- Above 15:18:

“On that day HaShem made a covenant with Avram, saying, ‘To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates.’”

4- Above 26:3 HaShem repeats the promise to Yitzchak:

“‘Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you, for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father.’”

5- Above 28:13 HaShem renews the promise to Ya’akov:

“And behold, HaShem stood above and said, ‘I am the Lord, the God of Avraham your father (grandfather) and the God of Yitzchak. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring.’”

6- Shemot 6:8 HaShem says to Moshe:

“‘And I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Avraham, to Yitzchak and to Ya’akov. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord.’”

Important to note that these verses do not mention Yishmael, Avraham's son from the Egyptian Hagar, who was expelled from any spiritual and material connection to Avraham by HaShem Himself.

The point that has to be made publicly and proudly in the great halls of the world's leaders is that there is no authority that can question the Jewish nation's sole inherent right to the holy land; not to be shared with any other claimants from any other quarter.

But on the other hand, I can judge our PM charitably by pointing out that probably no leading Chareidi rabbi would act differently for fear of reprisals from the other 8 billion people with whom we share this planet.

And of the Religious Zionist rabbis whom I know, I would assume that half would grab the opportunity. But there are some who I am sure would boldly stand at attention and say the right thing. One was Rav Shalom Gold and the second was my brother Meir both zt"l, and the third is Rav Meir Kahana's younger brother.

In conclusion a short anecdote:

It was 2 in the morning when a man passed a shoemaker busy at his work. When he pointed out the late hour the shoemaker replied, as long as the candle is burning there is still time to work".

Opportunities could present themselves again and some proud Jew would declare HaShem's simple truth to mankind.

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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