

BS”D Parashat Shlach 5782

What the Jewish World Needs Now

The Gemara (Pesachim 56a) describes the last hours of Ya’akov’s physical existence in this world. He gathered his 12 sons to reveal to them what will be for the Jewish nation at the “end of days”.

However, at the precise moment when their hearts and minds were at peak attentiveness, HaShem withdrew His Shechina (Divine Spirit) from Ya’akov and the revelations became obscured. Ya’akov feared that HaShem’s withdrawal might be due to one or more of his sons being a heretic. For just as his grandfather Avraham had begot the sinful Yishmael and his own father Yitzchak begot the evil Esav, he too might be cursed with a wayward son.

The brothers then turned to their father and spontaneously recited in unison:

שמעו יישראל יהוה אחד

“Hearken Yisrael (our father), the Lord is our God, the Lord is One”

Ya’akov then replied:

ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד

“Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom forever”

How could this single statement of “Shema Yisrael” defuse Ya’akov’s deep-seated suspicion of heresy? Why did Ya’akov not consider the possibility that the “heretical son” (if there was one) was lying?

I suggest:

The brothers waited impatiently to hear of the future geula. When Ya’akov realized that HaShem did not want the details to be disclosed, he turned to his sons with suspicion that they might be the cause. At that moment, HaShem placed His holy Shechina on the brothers and they announced in unison

שמע ישראל יהוה אחד

“Hearken Yisrael (our father), the Lord is our God, the Lord is One”

Ya’akov was stunned, because this statement was the essence of the prophecy that he had intended to reveal to his sons. Instead, it was taken from him and given to them.

I understand the prophecy to mean that just as the “Shema” consists of three phrases:

- 1) Shema Yisrael – Hearken Yisrael
- 2) HaShem Elokeinu – the Lord is our God
- 3) HaShem Echad – the Lord is One

So too will our future redemption evolve in three stages of history:

- 1) In the initial phrase of “Shema Yisrael”, the name of Am Yisrael is mentioned without HaShem’s name. This refers to the first stage of redemption with the in-gathering of Bnei Yisrael from the far corners of the globe to Eretz Yisrael. They would return for a variety of reasons and not necessarily religious ones. Most would come to escape antisemitism,

totalitarian regimes, or to build a state based on secular socialist Zionism.

2) In phase two, “HaShem Elokeinu” includes two names of HaShem: the ineffable (unutterable) YH representing HaShem’s quality of compassion, and the name “Elokeinu” representing HaShem’s quality of harsh justice.

This second stage of redemption would be characterized by a bitter conflict between Torah leaders as to how to view the Medina. Religious-Zionist rabbanim will see the Medina as the expression of HaShem’s quality of compassion for His people Yisrael. The Medina is HaShem’s declaration that the Shoah was the last major test in the 2000-year period of anger and galut (exile), and the beginning of a new period of our renaissance leading to the fulfillment of all our prophets’ visions. Millions of Jews have returned, our sovereignty over Yerushalayim and the Temple Mount and the extraordinary military victories are undeniable signs that the geula is at hand.

In contrast, the Haredi branch of Torah scholars will claim that the period of “Elokeinu” – harsh judgment – is still in effect; with the Medina just a stage in the natural development of political societies.

3) In phase three, “HaShem Echad” is when HaShem’s quality of compassion will reign alone, and all rabbinic leaders will unite in the reality that the Medina is HaShem’s avenue for the advent of Mashiach and our final redemption.

Yaakov, upon hearing the revelations voiced by his sons, added a fourth stage: “Baruch shem kevod malchuto le’olam va’ed” – blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom forever – signaling the universal acceptance of HaShem’s total mastery as Creator and Preserver of all things.

Today, with a near majority of the world’s halachic Jews in Eretz Yisrael, we are in the midst of the second stage of

HaShem Elokeinu where most of the Haredi rabbinic leadership do not hear the footsteps of the Mashiach in Medinat Yisrael.

The Segments within Judaism

Unfortunately, as predicted in the prophecy, there is today resentment tending to hostility between the Haredi and religious Zionist segments of Bnei Torah, although both are led by high-level Torah scholars.

(To clarify, there is no one Haredi model. They range from the most ultra anti-Zionists of Mea She'arim and the Neturei Karta of New York to the pleasant kollelnik in the yeshiva next door. I am referring to the mainstream Ben Torah whose life is Torah learning and strict observance of the mitzvot who can be found in the Hasidic and Lithuanian yeshivot from here to the galut.)

Despite these wide differences, both segments fulfill essential functions in this generation's development towards our final redemption.

It can be said in a wide sweep that the religious Zionist segment places the interests of the nation over individual self-perfection. Their ideology is based on three principles:

- 1- The fraternity among all the social elements merged together by their common goal. It is the willingness of the people to incorporate all the elements of society in the joint vision and effort for the future. If you can lay bricks or till the soil, then it doesn't matter what your personal beliefs are.

- 2- Willingness to accept personal responsibility for the physical security and economic growth of the nation.

- 3- A shared view in the moral righteousness of the cause.

Plus a clear perception of who the enemy is and who is a true friend.

Haredism fulfills an essential function, despite the fact that their ideological principals are very far from the elements essential for building a nation – certainly not for the nation building of Am YIsrael returning home after 2000 years of galut.

The ideal role model in the Haredi yeshiva world places the emphasis on self-perfection, known as “sh'tei'gen” – to reach up. Am Yisrael, in terms of the rank and file of the nation that encompasses all Jews (defined as anyone who an antisemite hates) is not part of their world. You won't find them in the military (except for a very small number) nor in the high-tech sector of the Medina (and if a Haredi does work in this sector, he is considered second class for shidduchim). In essence, the Haredi ben Torah does not need a Jewish Medina, because he feels comfortable in a bet midrash even in Las Vegas.

The function of Haredism for the Jewish nation can be likened to the anchor of a ship, guaranteeing that the mother ship does not drift from home port. Their very presence serves as living examples for all Jews to not drift from the boundaries of halacha and our hallowed traditions.

The Haredi is the coal stoker in the belly of an ancient ship, without whose input the ship cannot move. However, he is not part of the decision-making process. His influence on society is felt indirectly through his modest life standard, his dedication to halacha, his modest dress and moral behavior.

Unity

King David felt the pulse of the nation and was loved and

admired (Book of Shmuel 1 29,5).

In his 40 years as king, he together with the prophet Shmuel analyzed the essential topographical requirements and declared Yerushalayim as the place for the Bet Hamikdash and the eternal capital of the Jewish nation. King David extended Jewish sovereignty over all the area designated by the Torah as Eretz Yisrael, laid the groundwork for the Bet Hamikdash, authored Tehillim and was a rabbinic posek (halachic judge).

David achieved greatness by being a man of the people. He sensed the needs and potential of the nation and saw the entire scope of the Jewish people. He did not retreat to a semi-hermitic life and let HaShem take care of matters. David was a great Talmid Chacham, the nation's military leader, a pious Jew and initiator of the national agenda. He was one of the founders and role model of religious Zionism.

One hundred years ago, as nationalism and love of country became the main issues of the day, the Jewish people as a nation was ready to a great degree to entertain the idea of returning to Eretz Yisrael. Unfortunately, most of our spiritual leaders did not sense the flow of history which had gripped many peoples; and this vacuum of religious leadership was filled by secular Zionism.

Today in Eretz Yisrael, the pulse of the nation is in protecting and building our great country.

The Haredi rabbinic leadership is slowly acknowledging that the Medina is here to stay; that the nation has gathered around the national leadership and loves the land.

Rabbinic leaders in both segments will succeed in drawing the people to Torah, not by being aloof and critical but by acknowledging the reality of the Medina and by leading the nation in all fields.

The most respected institution in Israel is the army (Tzahal).

By boycotting Tzahal, the Haredi leadership has moved away from the national consensus and driven away many good Jews from clinging to the Torah.

The logic gleaned from our history is:

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Educate the young in accordance (in harmony) to his way (disposition, inclination, and temperament)

The religious segment must enter all walks of life, if it truly desires a nation based on Torah. It must fill the army with religious Zionist and Haredi soldiers and officers, as well as the industrial and managerial sectors.

It is up to the Haredi leadership to feel the pulse of the nation, like King David in his time, and take part in the leadership process.

Total unity will come about when we witness the miraculous demise of our enemies, as stated at the end of the first chapter of Tractate Berachot, that we will witness miracles far surpassing those of the exodus from Egypt.

We are not far from a religious awakening among the people of Eretz Yisrael, unparalleled since the time of Ezra Ha'Sofer. HaShem will "shine His countenance" upon all those who are here to receive it.

May HaShem grant our gallant soldiers victory over the forces of evil, for the final redemption of our people will come about in the merit of the mesirut nefesh (self-sacrifice) of His loyal children residing in Eretz Yisrael.

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

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