

BS"D Parashat Shoftim 5783

Messages for the Month of Elul

PART ONE: METAPHYSICAL and EMPIRICAL WORLDS and THEIR CONNECTION

A: 613 mitzvot emanated from the Creator and are stated in the Written and Oral Torah.

In addition to rabbinic chumrot (stringencies) surrounding the 613 mitzvot, there are seven rabbinic mitzvot independent of any Torah mitzva which were enacted over the years until the disbanding of the Sanhedrin: Hallel, Blessings, washing before eating bread, Eiruv for Shabbat, candle lighting, Purim, and Chanukah – together totaling 620 mitzvot.

B: The last Mishna in the Talmud (Tractate Ukrtzin 3,12) states:

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Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said, sin the future the Holy One blessed be He will present to every tzadik (righteous Jew) 310 worlds.

Derived from the verse written by King Shlomo in the book of Mishlay chap. 8. Without delving into the hidden meaning of the word “worlds,” where did King Shlomo get the number 310?

After thinking a bit, it dawned upon me. There are 613 Torah

mitzvot and an additional 7 rabbinic ones, totaling 620 – half of which is 310 – that is 310 for the righteous husband and 310 for the righteous wife. And each will have dominion over hundreds of worlds. Amazing!

C: Standing and Swearing at Mount Sinai

The term: **לפניו נשבענו** (before birth all Jewish souls were sworn to uphold the Torah during its future sojourn in this world) appears in many issues and topics in Halacha.

Now when connected with the above revelation of King Shlomo that in the afterlife a righteous Jew who has completed his vow to fulfill the mitzvot will be granted dominion over innumerable entities, we can deduce from the sparse information at our fingertips that that which awaits every Jew depends on his or her conduct in this world. Or to put it simply, before discussing hundreds of “worlds” we are tested on how we succeeded in governing one single world: the world that is YOU.

To govern a country, the leaders are in need of a variety of efforts. Our government, for example, consists of over 30 ministries; some are essential, but all are important.

Every one of us is duty-bound to provide his personal “world” with the responsibilities of Ministers to perform essential functions. Ministers of communications, defense, economy, education, energy, environmental protection, finance, foreign affairs, justice, religious services, strategic affairs, transport and road safety, etc. So that at the end of our journey, the Master of all worlds analyzes how we managed with our single personal world before assigning to us hundreds of additional worlds.

Each of us is the master of his/her fate and the captain of his/her future. What awaits everyone is the inevitably due diligence report regarding how we cared for our personal body, mind, conscience and neshama within the framework of Halacha.

These are the calls of Elul, Rosh Hashana, and Yom Kippur – awaken to your responsibilities, as the Rambam writes (Tshuva chapter 3):

[illegible]

Awake the sleepy from your slumber and the somnolent from your sleep, search your deeds and repent and remember your Creator those who forget the truth in the waste of time and spend all their days in vanity and emptiness which will neither benefit nor save. Look at your souls and make good your ways and your deeds and let each one of you leave his way that is evil, and his bad thoughts.

We, as sons and daughters of HaShem's chosen nation, are privileged as is expressed mostly on the high holy days when all mankind is judged.

We are privileged with the proof of our privilege the fact that as one of humanity's ancient nations, we are the only one that has survived . And our Father in Heaven has restored us to His holy sanctuary to continue where we left off 2000 years ago, and on the very streets that we walked on then, we walk today.

PART TWO: SETTLING OUR DEBTS

There are two centers of immediate military threat to the State of Israel. They are the Iranians, whose elite claim to be direct descendants of the ancient Persians; and the Hezbollah Shia militias of South Lebanon. That is not to say that the rest of the Middle East are ardent Zionists, but even

evil has gradations.

So why just the Iranians and Southern Lebanon; the two most vociferous, blatant, adamant enemies?

I submit:

Humanity, whether or not they admit it owes the Jewish nation and Judaism unfathomable spiritual, physical, philosophical, material and humanistic debts of gratitude. To discuss the details would require reams and reams of paper, but in one sentence it can be stated that: subtract the Jews and our contributions to mankind and one would be left with most humans swinging from trees like monkeys and cannibalizing one another. The concept of God would never have begun if not for us, and conscience would be a meaningless empty word. However, there are two countries which are our creditors, and to whom we owe a religious and historic debt, seemingly not yet paid in full: The Persians and the land of southern Lebanon.

Lebanon: Creditor #1

The young King Shlomo sent word to Hiram, King of Tyre, in what is today southern Lebanon, seeking his assistance with the erection of the Temple.

Hiram offered Shlomo wood and skilled workers, including artisans to work with precious metals, fabrics, and engraving. Solomon, in turn, provided thousands of laborers.

He sent Shlomo his best supervisors and provided all that he had been asked for. Hiram told Shlomo: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who made heaven and earth, who has given King David, a wise son, endowed with discretion and understanding, who will build a temple for the Lord " (Chronicles 2:11).

Iran: Creditor #2

King Cyrus the Great of Persia founded the Achaemenid Empire

by uniting the two original Iranian Tribes: the Medes and the Persians. In 539 BCE he allowed, and even encouraged, the exiled Jews to return to Eretz Yisrael to rebuild the temple!

These two historic-religious debts concerning the two Beti Mikdash are in Hashem's record books and must be repaid in full before we can advance towards rebuilding the third Bet Hamikdash. With every passing day the threats, hate, hostility, resentment, malice, animosity, enmity, scorn, antagonism, maliciousness, aversion, and venom coming from these two peoples reduce the extent of their previous good will towards the Jewish people. When the time, known to HaShem, arrives, there will no longer remain even a remnant of any goodwill in their past relationship with our people, and the debts will be repaid in full. Then we can strive and plan to restore the glory that was once Yerushalayim.

On the onset of these Days of Awe, I wish to bless all with a happy, healthy, and meaningful new year. I apologize if the manner in which I conveyed my ideas might have upset some readers, although I don't apologize for even one of the thoughts that I placed on the table.

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

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