

BS"D Parashat Tazria 5782

On the Background of Conflict: The Difference between Russia's Putin and Am Yisrael

Several Introductions:

1- Tehillim 119:89

בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה בָּרוּךְ

I have gained wisdom from many teachers, and they have taught me to meditate on Your statutes.

Simply put, King David acquired the wisdom to comprehend HaShem from every available source.

Question: From a contemporary Jewish-Israel viewpoint what can we learn from Mr. Putin, aside from "Do not murder"?

2- Excerpt from my upcoming autobiography:

One of my earliest recollections of childhood, when I was 7 or perhaps 8 years old, was an episode where I was together with my Abba (father z"l) in his study. He opened a desk drawer and inside I noticed a small bag with Hebrew writing on it. I asked, "what is in the bag?", and Abba said that I was not to touch it because it contained holy soil from Eretz Yisrael. Father was a great psychologist, because from that time on, I wanted only to hold the little bag! Sometime later, when again in the study, Abba asked me if I wanted to hold the bag. He

placed it in my hand and several small grains fell from it onto my palm. When I left the room, I swallowed the grains so that Eretz Yisrael would be a part of me!

My parents were deeply involved in contemporary issues of Jewish life. Abba was a member of the Revisionist Movement, founded by Ze'ev Jabotinsky. In opposition to the official policy of the Jewish Agency of Havlagah (self-restraint), the Revisionists demanded an aggressive militant response in the face of Arab atrocities in Eretz Yisrael. This movement was also the political wing of the underground Irgun Zvai Le'umi military organization, commanded at the time by Menachem Begin.

In 1947, when I was nine years old, Abba gave permission for Betar (the youth group of the Revisionist Movement) to maintain a branch in his synagogue. I enrolled as a member of the younger division of Betar. This was at the time when the United States, after voting for the establishment of a Jewish State in "Palestine", ordered an embargo of all military material to Palestine, knowing full well that the British were supplying the Arabs with abundant military equipment. This was a treacherous act instigated by the US State Department, which opposed the creation of the Jewish State. They understood the consequences of six hundred thousand unarmed Jews who were soon to be attacked by seven standing Arab armies, but they had undoubtedly neglected to read up on their Bible, as good Protestants should have done.

At the time, the duties of Betar included raising money for the purchase of weapons to be sent clandestinely to the Etzel (*Etzel is the Hebrew acronym for Irgun Zvai Leumi*), as well as maintaining a military training camp for volunteers who were sent to Palestine. Unknown to our parents, Meir completed the training camp, but was not sent. The Hashomer Hatzair (youth group of the radical socialist Mapam party) also maintained a training camp. Once they were practicing night landings from the sea, when a boat capsized, drowning two of the young men.

Word of this tragedy reverberated within all the Zionist organizations, including Betar, and we mourned deeply for them, despite the emotionally charged ideological differences between Betar and the secular, Hashomer Hatzair.

One of my tasks was to collect money. With my parent's permission, I would disappear for hours, into the subway system, which I knew perfectly, in order to solicit funds for the Etzel. At every station, the train would stop for approximately twelve seconds. I would stand at the head of the car and make a speech of how the Jews were fighting for their lives in Palestine and begged the commuters to help. My greatest fear was the police, who could have confiscated my daily "take" (which at times reached several hundred dollars) because the law prohibited the solicitation of funds by anyone under fourteen years of age. One day when I came home, the atmosphere was one of gloom and doom. The FBI had confiscated a large arms cache destined for Palestine. The arms had been hidden on the roof of 770 Eastern Parkway.

It was at this time that I witnessed a sight which will probably not be repeated until the days of the Mashiach. The Betar drove two trucks to Pitkin Avenue, in the then heavily Jewish populated section of east New York. We disembarked from the trucks, and every four boys held the corners of very large "Jewish" flags. Loudspeakers began sounding "Jewish" music and the results were swift in coming. Masses of people fought their way to get close to the flags in order to donate their money. I saw people put their hands in their pockets and, without even looking at what they drew out, throw it all into the flags.

I am sure that my teachers at the Yeshiva of Flatbush had no inkling of why I was drowsy on certain mornings.

Upon being accepted to Betar, every member received a pin with a picture of Biblical-Historic Eretz Yisrael on both sides of the Jordan river. On the foreground was a hand holding a rifle

with the words:

וְהַזְּבֵחַ

"JUST THIS", meaning we will settle for nothing less!

One of the Betar songs was composed by its founder Ze'ev Jabotinsky in 1929. It consisted of 4 stanzas each ending in the chorus:

וְהַזְּבֵחַ וְהַזְּבֵחַ וְהַזְּבֵחַ וְהַזְּבֵחַ וְהַזְּבֵחַ וְהַזְּבֵחַ וְהַזְּבֵחַ וְהַזְּבֵחַ

Two banks to the Jordan river: this one is ours and so is the other.

Back to this later.

3- Declarations & Treaties

On November 2, 1917, Lord Arthur Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary, sent a letter to Lionel Walter Rothschild, scion of the Rothschild family, a prominent Zionist and a friend of Chaim Weizmann, stating: "His Majesty's Government views with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object".

According to the mandate system created by the Treaty of Versailles of 1919, the San-Remo (Italy) international conference of the major allied nations who fought in World War One in 1920 entrusted Great Britain with the mandate to implement the establishment of a Jewish National home in Palestine. This was confirmed again in 1922 by the League of Nations. The future Jewish national home was to span both sides of the Jordan River. The eastern side measured 89,342 square kilometers (34,495 sq. miles); the western side 22,145 sq.km (8,630 sq. miles); together 111,487 sq. km (43,125 sq. miles) equal to the size of Egypt or to the state of South

Dakota.

Indeed, a sizeable piece of holy real-estate, although a lot less than what Hashem declared as the holy land for Am Yisrael. In any event, in 1922 the League of Nations accepted England's request to remove the eastern side of the Jordan from any and all commitments made by the League of Nations towards the Jewish people. Thus, in one fell swoop three quarters of our land was severed, to create the political entity today called Jordan.

4- Understanding Putin

When analyzing a complex issue, it is best to approach it with the 4W's and 1H formula: who, where, when, why, and how.

If we apply this to the Russian invasion of Ukraine we conclude:

Who? President Putin of Russia, formerly The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

Where? On the land area known as Ukraine.

When? Now.

Why? Ukraine was part of Russia for the better part of the last 800-1000 years. The population of Ukraine voted overwhelmingly for independence from the Soviet Union in the referendum of December 1, 1991, after the fall of the Soviet Union. Putin dreams of restoring to Russia its world power status by getting back its former lands.

How? Militarily, invading the now independent country of Ukraine.

Now to the essence...

I understand President Putin's desire to enhance his beloved mother Russia with greatness and glory. However, if he would have asked me, I would have taken out a bottle of real Israeli vodka and tried to work out a federal system with the former USSR nations to avoid spilling so much blood unnecessarily. But that's not the topic of this essay.

As stated above, one should collect wisdom from every available source, even from Aisav.

The British tore asunder three quarters of our hallowed biblical and historic homeland on both sides of the Jordan River; including the area where the incomparable Moshe Rabbeinu rests in peace.

The area which Am YIsrael was promised by HaShem after we would have the courage to wage a war of self-defense against the unmatched Og, king of Bashan and Sichon, king of Emori. The area that was settled by two and a half tribes of Israel – Reuven, Gad and half of Menashe, until they were exiled by the Assyrians in the time of Kings Achaz and Chizkiyau of Yehuda in the 7th century BCE, after residing in Trans Jordan for about 600 years.

The organized nations of the world recognized the full expanse of the Jewish national home as regarding the Jordan River (there is a lot more area that goes up to the Euphrates and down to the Nile). However, the British, who were always known to be perfidious, managed to unload their obligations as a mandate country regarding the Jewish people.

We should learn and even emulate not the acts of Putin, but his dedication to the greatness of his country. It is this that we have forgotten.

Is the reunification of historic Israel taught in any of the schools here, aside from some religious Zionist ones?

It is a fact of life that opportunities present themselves in

public, national and private lives, but if we don't prepare ourselves to leap at the occasion they will pass and perhaps not reappear for generations.

The same applies to our large gentile minority here in Eretz Yisrael; there are opportunities, but the nation had to be prepared to grasp them when they came.

Conclusion:

It is possible to explain the difference between Putin of Russia and Am Yisrael on the background of the conflict between our father Yitzchak and our mother Rivka regarding who should be the progenitor of the future Am Yisrael.

I believe that there were no secrets between this holy couple, Yitzchak preferred that Eisav should be the progenitor of God's chosen people, while Rivka preferred the scholarly yeshiva student Yaakov.

Theirs was an ideologic conflict based on their sons' innate nature.

In their younger years, Ya'akov and Eisav while still under the influence of their parents, were God-fearing and mitzva observant; with one dramatic difference. Eisav was by nature extreme and fanatical. In his religious world there was no place for weakness, fineness or fragility; the end justifies the means in the worship of the Creator. There was no room in his worship of the Ultimate for the words of King Shlomo (Mishley 3:17):

וְשָׁמַנְתָּהּ שְׁמַנְתָּהּ-מִתְּמִתָּהּ ;מִתְּמִתָּהּ-מִתְּמִתָּהּ שְׁמַנְתָּהּ

Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace.

Ya'akov by nature shaped the image of his future great grandson, Aharon the Kohen Gadol, regarding whom the illustrious Hillel said (Pirkei Avot 1:12):

בְּרוּכָה הַמָּהִינָה וְהַמְּלִיכָה, בְּרוּכָה הַמְּלֵאָה וְהַמְּלֵאָה
בְּרוּכָה הַמְּלֵאָה וְהַמְּלֵאָה, בְּרוּכָה הַמְּלֵאָה וְהַמְּלֵאָה, בְּרוּכָה

Be as of the disciples of Aaron: Love peace, pursue peace, love humanity and draw them close to Torah.

Yitzchak and Rivka agreed on the future challenges of a G-d chosen people living within a world of 70 basic races which were impervious to spirituality. They both knew in theory that there was a price to be paid for the status of G-d's chosen people.

Yitzchak claimed that to represent the ultimate sanctity, their children would suffer thousands of years of exile and all that comes with it. So, in name of self-preservation of HaShem's chosen nation we have to acquire the strength, vigor, determination and at times the cruelty of an Eisav. Rivka claimed but at what price? That Judaism would be like Isis or religious Nazis?

Putin has the skin of an Eisav; Am YIsrael has the light of Ya'akov and Aharon. Thanks to our mother Rivka!

Several matters to remember and not forget:

Destruction of Amalek

The sanctity of all Promised Land

JLMM – Jewish Lives Matter Most

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

Copyright © 5782/2022 Nachman Kahana