

# BS"D Parashat Tetzaveh – Zachor 5785

## The miraculous survival of the Jewish nation

### PART ONE

Moshe descended from Mount Sinai with a message from HaShem to Am Yisrael (Shemot 19,6):

וְאַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל אֱלֹהִים אֶתְּהַיְתָּ לְךָ וְלְכָל הָעָם אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדְךָ  
וְלֵאמֹר יִשְׂרָאֵל אֱלֹהִים אֶתְהַיְתָּ

*You shall be for Me, a kingdom of Kohanim and a holy nation.*

Question: It is estimated that only about 5% of the nation are Kohanim, so what is the meaning of “a kingdom of Kohanim”?

We will return to this.

The Gemara (Yuma 5b) points out a discrepancy regarding the order in which Aharon and his four sons donned the sacred Kohanic vestments, which bestowed upon them and their descendants the sanctified status as Kohanim, until the end of time.

Our parasha Tetzaveh (Shemot 28:41) states:

וְאַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל אֱלֹהִים אֶתְהַיְתָּ לְךָ וְלְכָל הָעָם אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדְךָ

*And you (Moshe) shall dress Aharon your brother (with the*

*holy vestments) together with his sons.*

This was with the understanding that Aharon and his sons were to dress at the same time. However, in parashat Vayak'heil (Shemot 40,13-14), it states:

וְאַתָּה תַּלְבֵּשׁ אֶת־אַהֲרֹן בְּהַלְבֵּשׁוֹתָיִם קֹדֶשׁ וְאַתָּה תִּמְשָׁח אֹתוֹ לְעֹשֵׂתִי׃

וְאַתָּה תִּבְרָא אֶת־בְּנֵי אֶהֱרֹן וְתַלְבֵּשׁ אֹתָם בְּתֻנִּיֹתָיִם׃

*And you shall dress Aharon with the holy vestments and anoint him to serve Me. And you shall bring his sons and dress them in the tunics.*

This was with the understanding that only after Aharon completed donning his holy vestments would his sons begin to don theirs.

The rabbis of the Gemara saw the contradiction, but at the beginning deemed it to be of no consequence. They knew that at the time of the third and ultimate Bet Hamikdash when the order of dress would become pertinent, there would be resurrection, and Moshe and Aharon would direct us regarding how to conduct the matter. However, the rabbi who pointed out the contradiction continued to pose the problem for the purpose of solving the apparent contradiction. It appears that the yeshiva did not want to get involved with the spiritual and philosophic aspects of the two possibilities and the matter was not resolved.

I submit that there is a huge difference between Aharon donning the garments first and then his sons versus Aharon and his four sons simultaneously donning their garments. This difference has fundamental implications for understanding the essence of Kohanic sanctity, and even beyond.

Had HaShem commanded Moshe to have Aharon and his sons don the holy vestments at the same time, the implication would have

been that the sanctity of Aharon and his sons were equal, and Aharon as Kohen Gadol (High Priest) served as first among equals. But donning the holy vestments before his sons (thereby completing his “initiation” into the Kehuna before them), it would imply that the sacred order of Kehuna emanated from HaShem to Aharon directly as “transfer number one”, and from Aharon to his sons, as “transfer number two”. In other words, the status of sanctity of Aharon and every succeeding Kohen Gadol is closer to HaShem than that of the general population of Kohanim.

Notwithstanding the above implications and suppositions, the matter was actually resolved by the rabbinic authorities who codified the texts of our blessings and prayers. Kohanim recite an introductory blessing before invoking the three verse Kohanic blessings as brought in parashat Naso (Bamidbar chapter 6):

ברוך אתה יהוה 'ה 'ה מלך 'ה עולם  
הוא אהרן וכל בניו  
הוא אהרן וכל בניו

***Blessed are You H' E' King of the universe Who has sanctified us with the sanctity of Aharon and commanded us to bless His nation Yisrael in love.***

Aharon was the sole receiver of the Kehuna directly from HaShem and then passed down through him to all succeeding Kohanim.

This has great implications for our understanding of HaShem's relationship with the Jewish nation vis-a-vis the gentile nations of the world, and for understanding the enigmatic message:

יהוה אחד יהוה אחד יהוה אחד יהוה אחד יהוה אחד יהוה אחד

*You shall be for Me, a kingdom of Kohanim and a holy nation.*

As stated above, HaShem relates to Am Yisrael with the sobriquet 'Mamlechet Kohanim' – a Kingdom of Kohanim. However, only 5 percent of Jews are Kohanim, and certainly not a "Kingdom of Kohanim".

Here is the point:

HaShem's revelation of His intimate relationship with the descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov was identical to the process of sanctifying Aharon and his sons as Kohanim.

Just as Aharon was on a higher level of sanctity than his sons, and was not just first among equals, Am Yisrael descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov was on a higher level in the family of nations, but not first among equals.

Our chosenness was an expression of our intimate relationship with HaShem, just as Aharon was the first and only Kohen in the world through whom the others received their Kehuna. So, too, it is that Am Yisrael is the singular nation that has a direct and intimate connection with the Creator of Heaven and Earth. Only through us does the Creator deal with what is known as "humanity". We are the essence of the Creator whose life force gives life to all other nations.

It is told that King Louis the 16th, the last king of France, before the fall of the monarchy during the French Revolution, asked a philosopher for proof that God exists. The answer he received was two words "Les Juis" – the Jews.

Conclusion:

Indeed, just as HaShem has planned it, He has guaranteed His guardianship and the miraculous survival of the Jewish nation for 4000 years. Our survival and unprecedented return to Eretz Yisrael after 2000 years in exile proves His existence as Creator and Master of all that exists.

## PART TWO

Now one might ask why we should believe that HaShem is zealously guarding Medinat Yisrael? Are we such great tzaddikim to deserve His supernatural miracles?

To this I reply with two reasons:

1- There were very few generations where so many Jews were willing to put their lives in jeopardy to be in Eretz Yisrael for no other reason than they are Jews.

Both the Torah-observant Jew and those who are not, have come to this Land to defend and develop her, and will never leave – because they are Jews. The proof of the love the people in Medinat Yisrael have for the Land of Israel is the millions of other Jews who choose to remain in the galut rather than risk their lives for the Jewish State. It is this love of being Jewish that resonates in Heaven and arouses HaShem's love, devotion, and protection of His chosen people.

2: The TaNaCh in Melachim 2 chapter 14 says:

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<sup>23</sup> *In the fifteenth year of Amaziah son of Yoash, King of Yehuda, Yeravam son of (a different) Yoash, King of Yisrael, ruled over Shomron for forty-one years.*

<sup>24</sup> *He did evil in the eyes of the Lord and did not turn away from any of the sins that Yeravam son of Navat had caused Israel to commit.* <sup>25</sup> *He (the evil Yeravam ben Yoash) restored the boundaries of Israel from Levo Hamat to the Dead Sea, in accordance with the word of the Lord, the God of Israel, spoken through his servant Yonah son of Amittai, the prophet from Gat Chefer.*

<sup>26</sup> *The Lord had seen how bitterly everyone in Israel was suffering, with no one to help them.* <sup>27</sup> *And since the Lord had said that He would not blot out the name of Israel from under heaven, He saved them by the hand of Yeravam son of Yoash.*

<sup>28</sup> *As for the other events of Yeravam's reign, all that he did, and his military achievements, including how he recovered for Israel both Damascus and Hamat, which had belonged to Yehuda, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Yisrael?* <sup>29</sup> *Yeravam rested with his ancestors, the kings of Yisrael. And Zechariah his son succeeded him as king.*

The second Yeravam was very far from being a halachic person; indeed, he was a rasha. Yet, he was victorious in all his military campaigns, including expanding the borders of the Land and capturing Damascus.

The reason for his great successes could not be attributed to his great 'righteousness'. It was because "the Lord had seen how bitterly everyone in Israel was suffering with no one to help them. And the Lord had said that He would not blot out the name of Israel from under heaven".

When the enemies of Yisrael are so many, and the merits of the nation are less than what they should be, HaShem has no choice but to save His chosen people just as a father protects his beloved child.

And this explains why the Medina exists and thrives within a sea of Amaleks, in a full-blown sea of war and hate.

This is the message we should be aware of on this Shabbat Zachor that promises the defeat of all our enemies.

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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