

BS"D Parashat Truma – Chodesh Adar 5783

The Foundation Stone

This week's divrei Torah refers to the foundation stone of our existence – HaShem's relationship with Am Yisrael.

Tractate Ta'anit 29a:

הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה הָיָה יוֹם שֶׁל חֵן וְשֶׁל חַסְדִּים :וְהָיָה יוֹם שֶׁל חֵן וְשֶׁל חַסְדִּים וְהָיָה יוֹם שֶׁל חֵן וְשֶׁל חַסְדִּים
וְהָיָה יוֹם שֶׁל חֵן וְשֶׁל חַסְדִּים וְהָיָה יוֹם שֶׁל חֵן וְשֶׁל חַסְדִּים

Just as the advent of the (Hebrew) month of Av ushers in a period of diminishing joy, so too the advent of the month of Adar ushers in a period of increasing joy.

It is apparent from the words “diminishing and increasing” that basic ‘joy” is a constant, with the difference between Av, Adar, and the other 10 months of the year only to its degree.

However, constant Jewish joy is a problematic idea. For even a superficial perusal of history is sufficient to demonstrate the difficulties, both from internal and external sources, which plagued our nation beginning with the first Jew, Avraham Aveinu, who reintroduced HaShem into society after being replaced with idolatry by Nimrod (son of Cush, son of Cham, son of Noach – Bereishiet chapter 10).

HaShem offered Avraham a “package deal” known as the “Covenant of the Severed Pieces” (brit bayn ha'betarim; parashat Lech Le'cha). HaShem would grant Avraham and all his descendants,

born only from our mother Sarah, guaranteed life and privileged spiritual status in this world as well as eternal life in the next, if he would agree to be Hashem's "Chosen Nation" and live according to the Torah. Avraham was aware that HaShem's nation implied being radically different from all other nations. The gentile peoples adopted values and formed cultures resulting from generations of trial and error. Whereas the values and culture of Am Yisrael would be decided on by the Creator of heaven and earth, and dictated to the Jewish nation in the few seconds that it would take for them to hear HaShem say the first of the Ten Commandments (Shemot 20,2):

אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךְ יְהוָה אֶלֶף-בֵּית
מִצְרָיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

According to the covenant, Jews would be monotheists, worshipping only one God in an ancient polytheistic world where all societies worshiped multiple gods. This would immediately set us apart as an outcast nation. Even today, when we have succeeded in influencing billions of people to accept monotheism, we are diverted to the periphery of nations.

Interestingly, every member of the UN can in theory be elected to the Security Council except for one – Israel. The condition for membership in that body is that the nation must belong to a regional group, i.e., European Union, Council of African Nations, Arab League, etc., and since Israel doesn't belong to any regional group, it does not qualify. We do not belong to east nor to west, as in the words of Bilam, we are:

מִזְרָח וּמַעֲרָב

a nation that dwells alone.

Most of the 1.2 billion Christians believe in a trinity where they grasp their “one” god as consisting of three segments; while HaShem is an inconceivable, absolute, indivisible ONE. The over 1 billion Moslems grasp their Alla to be a bloodthirsty, vengeful entity that demands that every kofer (non-moslem) be murdered, preferably by beheading; while HaShem is רַחוּם רַחוּם – compassionate and caring for all His creations.

Avraham was aware of this situation and of the never-ending anti-Semitism that would arise from our loyalty to the Torah and our ascent to the status of chosen nation.

Our father, Avraham, made the right decision in the name of all his Jewish descendants; that no matter the price, we would willingly consent to be HaShem’s chosen people with no possibility of abrogating the Covenant.

This is the overflowing source of our greatest joy, that of all of mankind’s descendants, it is only we whom HaShem chose -- to be his cherished son (Shemot 4,22):

וְאָמַרְתָּ לְפָרָעֹה, כֹּה אָמַר ה' אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים, בְּרִשְׁתִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל
בְּרִשְׁתִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל

Then you shall say to Pharaoh, “Thus says HaShem: Yisrael my firstborn son”

Love Your Fellow Jew

From here we can understand the very challenging demand of the Torah (Vayikra 19,18):

’וּלְאָהֶבְךָ אֶת־עַמְּךָ אֶל־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ

and love your fellow Jew as you love yourself; I am HaShem

Why and how can I love another person just because he or she is Jewish?

Moreover, as a kohen, I ascend the bima every day to bless the congregation. It is a large congregation, and I don’t know even half the people; nevertheless, I am commanded to commence with the bracha:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ
יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

Blessed are You, HaShem our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us (kohanim) with the sanctity of Aharon (Kohen Gadol) and commanded us to bless His (Hashem’s) nation Yisrael with love.

How can the Torah demand of me to love a person that I don’t even know?

I submit that the answer lies in the last words of the verse – “I am Hashem.” This is the rationale and justification for this seemingly irrational demand. HaShem is saying, “I am the ultimate Creator and you are My chosen people. If your fellow Jew is good enough for me to love, he is good enough for you to love!

So, today, as we usher in the month of Adar, when in ancient Persia in this month our fate swung like a pendulum from death decree of all Jewish men, women and children in the 127 districts of Achashverosh in a single day, to the miraculous intervention of HaShem creating for us the joyous holiday of

Purim, to modern day Persia-Iran where they repeat their plans to murder all the Jews in Israel – men women and children in one day with nuclear weapons, we can optimistically and assuredly wait in expectation for another bigger and better Purim.

In conclusion, dear brothers and sisters, let us raise our glasses and drink “le’chayim” to the next joyous Purim which will usher in the final act in HaShem’s restoration of our former glory, centered in the capital of the world, the sacred city of Yerushalayim.

Chodesh tov & Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

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