

BS"D Rosh HaShana 5787

Rosh HaShana

The Mishna (tractate Rosh HaShana 18a):

ביום הזה עובר לפני ה' כל בשר וכל חיה וכל טמא וכל טהור וכל אדם וכל חיה וכל טמא וכל טהור וכל אדם

*On Rosh HaShana all **humanity** passes before the Almighty as an army of soldiers passes in review.*

What is this all-inclusive word **humanity** composed of?

Answer: HaShem, Creator of heaven and earth and all that they entail, separated mankind into two disproportional groups where A is numerically inferior to B, but is infinitely spiritually greater than B.

A is the 13 (or so) million halachic Jews who comprise Am Yisrael today, and B is the 8.5 **billion** non-Jews.

Rambam states that Moshe ascended Mount Sinai to deliver HaShem's 613 mitzvot in a unique and infinite bond (brit) with the Jewish nation alone and was also designated to deliver the seven Noachide mitzvot to the non-Jews.

Six hundred and thirteen as opposed to seven – 87 to one (interesting this is the year 5787).

The Noachide laws contain 6 prohibitions: Idolatry; Blasphemy; Murder; Theft; Sexual Immorality; and Cruelty to Animals, and one affirmative command – the establishment of moral legal systems.

Important to note: the Gemara (tractate Avoda Zara 3a) states

that after seeing that the gentile nations were not capable of adhering to even these seven obligations, HaShem demoted their status vis a vis the 7 commandments; that their performance will be considered as one who is not commanded but does so voluntarily, the reward for which is inferior to the reward of one who is obligated. The rationale being that a volunteer has in the back of his mind the consoling thought that if he succeeds well and good, but if he fails he will not be punished, whereas one who is obligated to succeed is under stress that he has no alternative but to succeed, as stated by Rabbi Chanina (Kiddushin 31a):

גדול יותר הוא המצווה והעושה [מצוה] מן המצווה והעושה [מצוה] מן המצווה והעושה [מצוה]

Greater is one who is commanded and does [a mitzvah] than one who is not commanded and (voluntarily) does it.

Rosh HaShana is the time for introspection with what we come before the Heavenly court.

People are judged individually and so too are nations, cultures and religions.

There is little that we know of the creator, except for Moshe Rabbeinu who was privileged more than any human to draw closer to the Creator. Nevertheless, there are some aspects of His presence that we can conclude through 3000 years of serving as His chosen people. We know that all His creations in this and in the next worlds have a purpose and nothing is irrelevant, from the highest spiritual entities (angels) to the tiniest microbe under the oceans. We humans are expert in “killing time,” but HaShem created time and every fraction of it is valuable and necessary.

Each segment of humanity (Jews vs gentiles) has its unique requirements on the individual level and then on his

collective level.

After many years of harsh servitude in Egypt, HaShem replaced serving Paro with serving the Creator. The Jews as **individuals** served their Egyptian taskmasters through stones and mortar, but at Mount Sinai and until the end of days each individual Jew is obligated to fulfill the divine will as outlined in the 613 mitzvot (commandments) to connect his and her physical world with the spiritual.

But on the **collective** level working as a **nation** we are expected to act as partners in elevating all humanity morally, ethically, and spiritually, bringing them closer to their divine potential.

But what about the gentile world? What are the divine expectations regarding the individual non-Jew and gentiles collectively? What place do the descendants of Aisav, Yishmael, the other offspring of Shem, Cham and Yefet and the descendants of Kayin son of Adam and Chava have?

It can be summed up by an incident in the life of the renowned Harav Meir Shapira zt"l, founder and rosh yeshiva of the Chachmai Lublin yeshiva, planner and organizer of the Daf HaYomi study program. The yeshiva had at its prime 400 students in a dormitory system, the first of its kind at the time.

He was once asked, why do we need so many rabbis?

Harav Shapiro replied, "From these 400 young men I want at least one great talmid chacham while all the rest should learn to respect and value him".

In order to understand what HaShem expects from Mankind on the collective level, we draw upon the words of the prophet Yeshayahu chapter 60. The chapter opens with a call to Am Yisrael and then turns his attention to the goyim:

Arise, shine, for your light has come, symbolizing HaShem's presence returning to His people amidst surrounding global darkness. This light becomes a beacon that draws nations and kings to Jerusalem.

Ships from distant lands (such as Tarshish) and caravans from Midian, Ephah, and Sheba will bring gold, frankincense, and praises to the Lord, transforming the city of Yerushalayim into global significance and prosperity.

Nations will walk by your light, and kings to the brightness of your glow.

Verse 4: Lift up your eyes and look about you: All assemble and come to you; your sons come from afar, and your daughters are carried on the shoulders.

Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy; the wealth on the seas will be brought to you, to you the riches of the nations will come.

Herds of camels will cover your land, young camels of Midian and Ephah. And all from Sheba will come, bearing gold and incense and proclaiming the praise of the Lord.

All Kedar's flocks will be gathered to you, the rams of Nebaioth will serve you; they will be accepted as offerings on my altar, and I will adorn my glorious temple.

Foreigners will rebuild your walls, and their kings will serve you. Though in anger I struck you, in favor I will show you compassion.

Your gates will always stand open, they will never be shut, day or night, so that people may bring you the wealth of the nations, their kings led in triumphal procession.

For the nation or kingdom that will not serve you will perish; it will be utterly ruined.

The glory of Lebanon will come to you, the juniper, the fir and the cypress together, to adorn my sanctuary; and I will glorify the place for my feet.

The children of your oppressors will come bowing before you; all who despise you will bow down at your feet and will call you the City of the Lord, Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

Although you have been forsaken and hated, with no one traveling through, I will make you the everlasting pride and the joy of all generations.

No longer will violence be heard in your land, nor ruin or destruction within your borders, but you will call your walls Salvation and your gates Praise.

And the last verse in chapter 60:

*The least of you will become a thousand, the smallest a mighty nation. I am the Lord; **in its time I will do this swiftly.***

וְהָיָה הָעָם הַזֶּה כְּעָם הַרְבֵּה וְהָיָה הַיָּגֵן הַזֶּה כְּעָם הַרְבֵּה וְהָיָה הַיָּגֵן הַזֶּה כְּעָם הַרְבֵּה וְהָיָה הַיָּגֵן הַזֶּה כְּעָם הַרְבֵּה

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Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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