

Chukat 5776

BS"D Parashat Chukat 5776

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Authentic Neshamot & Real Torah

Every tractate of the Babylonian Talmud begins with page 2 (the letter bet). Why?

The reason I suggest is that even one who has studied the entire Talmud has not yet reached the first alef of the "real" Torah. "Real" Torah is not in the beit midrash. It is in the application of what is studied in the beit midrash to the realities of life and the challenges that HaShem places before every Jew and before the collective nation of Am Yisrael.

Elie Wiesel Z"L, Rabbi Sacks, Former Chief Rabbi of the UK, HaRav Michael Mark ZT"L and the young girl Hallel Yaffe Ariel A"H

Elie Wiesel, concentration camp survivor, Nobel Peace Prize winner and author who was regarded as one of the most powerful voices in Holocaust literature, has died in the US at the age of 87.

He was quoted as saying, "Memory has become a sacred duty of all people of goodwill." And Prime Minister Netanyahu said, "Israel and the Jewish people mourn the passing of Wiesel. Through his unforgettable books, moving words and personal example, Elie personified the triumph of the human spirit over the most unimaginable evil."

Through his words and his work, Wiesel spent his life preparing future generations for the day when there would no longer be a living witness to the Holocaust.

Using his personal story as both a testimonial and departure point for his writing, he earned a reputation as the leading spiritual archivist of the Nazi persecution of the Jews.

He never put to rest a question that had haunted him since the war: Why did those who knew about the Nazis' effort to exterminate the Jews not do more to prevent it?

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, is the former Chief Rabbi of the UK, a renowned religious leader, philosopher, award-winning author and respected moral voice.

He was recently named the winner of the 2016 Templeton Prize in recognition of his "exceptional contributions to affirming life's spiritual dimension."

Since stepping down as the Chief Rabbi – a position he served for 22 years between 1991 and 2013 – Rabbi Sacks has held a number of professorships at several academic institutions including Yeshiva University and King's College London.

Rabbi Sacks is a frequent and sought after contributor to radio, television and the press both in Britain and around the world.

He has authored over 30 books. His most recent work, *Not in God's Name*, was awarded a 2015 National Jewish Book Award in America and was a top-ten Sunday Times bestseller in the UK. Past works include *The Great Partnership* and *The Dignity of Difference*, winner of the Grawemeyer Prize for Religion in 2004 for its success in defining a framework for interfaith dialogue between people of all faiths and of none.

Rabbi Sacks and the late Elie Wiesel are distinguished

Land and others not?

Rabbi Berel Wein Shlita, the noted Jerusalem scholar, historian, speaker and educator wrote last week for Arutz Sheva 7:

“To a great extent the Jewish people have always had an easier time dealing with the study and observance of Torah than with the primacy of the Land of Israel in Jewish life and thought.

For various reasons, throughout our history we have always had difficulty dealing with the reality of being an independent, self-governing national entity living within the borders of the country that the Lord assigned to us.

Even before ever entering the Land of Israel, as we read (in parshat Shlach) the Jewish people shied away completely from entering that land and establishing their home there. They preferred living in a trackless desert to having to face the realities of nation building and a problem-laden challenging existence...

All later generations of Torah scholars and biblical commentators have attempted to understand what the driving force was that made the Jewish people so resist their entry into the Holy Land.

Though there are many incisive and psychologically penetrating thoughts advanced on this subject, after all is said and done, the question remains a perplexing and disturbing one. Why is it that the generation (our generation) that saw so many miracles – in fact lived a miraculous existence on a daily basis and pledged themselves and their descendants to live a unique and moral lifestyle – should somehow have balked at entering the Land of Israel. Like most questions that begin with the word “why,” there are no easy or convincing answers to this difficult issue...

There are, unfortunately, many Jews within the Jewish world today who still do not recognize the Land of Israel as being a central tenet of our faith and our existence. It is almost irrational, certainly inexplicable, why after all of the events of the past two centuries of Jewish life this should be so...

So, all we can do is recognize that this has been a constant problem in Jewish society since the days of Moshe and that basically all we can do is acknowledge the situation while continuing to persevere in building and populating the Land.”

Rabbi Wein poses the age-old question concerning why so many Jews distance themselves from the Holy Land of Eretz Yisrael – greatest gift HaShem presented to our forefathers for their future generations. He concludes that the question has always been beyond our ability to reach a satisfactory answer.

With Rabbi Wein’s permission, I would suggest that the answer to his question is indeed beyond our intellectual reach, indeed beyond the range of worldly factors. It is in the realm of the neshama.

Although we know very little of the neshama, we can say that they are distinguished between the neshamot which are attracted to spirituality in HaShem’s Holy Land and those who are not, for reasons known only to their Creator (Borei neshamot).

Avraham was attracted to the Land. His brothers Nachor and Haran were not; and, therefore, they did not accompany Avraham in his journey to the Land.

Yitzchak felt the pull. Yishmael did not and therefore journeyed to the eastern countries.

Ya’akov had the attraction, but his brother Aisav did not and settled in the land of Edom.

HaRav Michael Mark ZT"l and the young Hallel Yaffee Ariel A"H

Last week an Arab entered the Ariel home in the Ramat Mamrey section of Kiryat Arba and murdered 13-year-old **Hallel Yaffee Ariel**. The following day, Arabs shot and murdered **Harav Michael Mark** and seriously wounded his wife Chava Rachel bat Ayelet Hashachar. These kedoshim (holy martyrs) were added to the too-long list of kedoshim who preceded them.

There are people who will be judged in Heaven by what they suffered for being a Jew. Others will be judged on the merits of what they do in life. Rabbi Michael and the young Hallel have entered Gan Eden because of who they are.

They are a son and daughter of this Holy Land, who have reached the level of "real Torah" which they lived to the fullest from the moment they were born to their dying breath.

These are the authentic neshamot of Am Yisrael who cling to the Land and develop her according to the letter and spirit of "real Torah".

The tractates of their lives begin with the letter alef.

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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