

Days of Awe 5775

BS"D Days of Awe (Yamim Nora'im) 5775

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

This is being written on the fast day of Gedalya ben Achikam, the Babylonian appointed governor over the remnant of Jews in Eretz Yisrael after the destruction of the first Temple. Gedalya was assassinated by Yishmael ben Natanya, which caused the Babylonians to murder and exile most of the remaining Jews in Eretz Yisrael.

Who, at that time, could have imagined that 2500 years later there would be Jews in the world, even Torah observant Jews, with over 6 million of us in the Holy land; and with no Babylonian to be found on the planet?

Shofar Blasts & Akaidat Yitzchak

The episode of Akaidat Yitzchak (the binding of Yitzchak) looms very high in the traditions of these holy days, to the extent that HaShem's acceptance of our teshuva is linked to that episode. In fact many sources explain that the mitzva of sounding the shofar on Rosh HaShana is to bring forth before the Almighty the merit of Akaidat Yitzchak.

The Gemara (Shabbat 89b) records that at some unspecified future time, HaShem will relate to Avraham Avenu "banecha chatu li" – your sons have sinned against me. Avraham will reply that they should be severely punished. HaShem will not be satisfied by his reply and repeats to Ya'akov that HIS sons have sinned against Me. Ya'akov, like his grandfather Avraham, will reply that they should be severely punished for their sins.

HaShem is now displeased with Yaakov.

He then will inform Yitzchak of the low spiritual state of HIS children, to which Yitzchak will counter with the claim that the episode of the Akaida is sufficient reason for HaShem to forgive the transgressions of Am Yisrael.

What makes the episode of Akaidat Yitzchak so essential in our requests for forgiveness?

I submit:

The call to sacrifice Yitzchak was made by HaShem to Avraham, not to Yitzchak. So, in fact, Yitzchak had the prerogative to refuse. And had he done so, Avraham would have been exempted from his obligation due to causes beyond his control, and Yitzchak could not have been held liable, because as stated he was not commanded. Yet Yitzchak agreed to be the sacrifice demanded by HaShem of his father Avraham, for one reason. That despite the fact that HaShem did not command Yitzchak to give up his life, Yitzchak knew that it was HaShem's **will** that he be sacrificed on the altar on what was to become the Temple Mount, in Yerushalayim,

By Yitzchak advancing the episode of the Akaida to counter HaShem's implicit warnings that He has taken notice of our dire sins, Yitzchak is saying to HaShem: "You did not command me to relinquish my life at 37 years old under my father's knife. Yet I agreed for one reason. I knew that that was your wish. We, the Jewish people, also have a wish. It is to be loyal sons to You, our Father-in-Heaven. But we are human beings, made of flesh and blood, distracted and bombarded by the yetzer hara (our corporeal instincts) which seeks to drive us away from the holy Torah. So just as I yielded to what I knew was your desire, so too, listen to the wishes of Your people Am Yisrael and forgive them for their sins.

The shofar blasts are intended to bring forth before HaShem that we Jews seek to fulfill not only the implicit mitzvot of

the Written Torah and Oral Torah, but that we run to carry out even Your implied, implicit and silent wishes.

Halachic Robots

The principle of doing HaShem's silent wishes is upon us every moment. A Jew who lives only according to the letter of the Halacha while ignoring the spirit of Halacha, is an halachic robot who does not come even close to what a Jew should be. The taking of that "one more step" which we call "lifnim mei'shurat hadin" (beyond the requirements of the law) is what defines a Jew as being God fearing. The Torah says we must give tzdaka (charity). So one can give money to a needy person like you throw a bone to a dog: or he can also speak to the person and give him hope that things in life have a way of turning around.

The Zohar states that there are two kinds of Gehennom – one of fire and the other of ice.

I believe that the fire is for those who have committed a sin in heated passion and the Gehennom of ice awaits those who have fulfilled a **mitzva** with lack of passion.

Stairway to Heaven

I want to begin this new year with a call to my brothers and sisters in the galut.

I am fully aware of the pilpulistic contortions and meanderings taken by some Halachic "authorities" in the galut to prove that there is no mitzva today to live in Eretz Yisrael. And it is to those Halachic "giants" that I am now turning.

Open a Chumash to any parsha and you will not be able to

escape Eretz Yisrael. Most learned Jews know that it is a Torah mitzva in every generation for every Jew to live in Eretz Yisrael when the gates to the Holy land are open.

But even if you believe that the official mitzvah will only be incumbent when the Mashiach comes; stand in front of a mirror and ask yourself: "Is it HaShem's desire that a Jew live in His Holy Land or is the issue absolutely immaterial to the Almighty?"

HaShem indeed wants every Jew to be in the Land that He chose over all others for His holy Temple and declared to be the Stairway to Heaven.

Now since it is HaShem's desire that His children be in Eretz Yisrael, even if you believe that it is not an official mitzva today, wasn't it Yitzchak's decision to give up his life because he knew that that was the wish of HaShem?

Denying the Mitzvah Empowers Our Enemies

On Shabbat I met a Jew from London who told me of an abomination and abhorrent event which occurred there several days ago. Thousands of Satmar followers holding PLO flags marched through the city streets screaming anti-Israel slogans, calling for the destruction of the State. If that was not bad enough, this gentleman said that in the area where he was standing, not one Jew protested what these pseudo Jews were doing, because these Satmar are violent fanatics.

This scene could very easily be repeated in New York or any other place where the teachings of Satmar and Naturei Karta poison the Jewish mind.

Perhaps this is what the prophet Zecharia is referring to in chapter 14,14 that Yehuda will join with the enemies of

Yerushalayim.

These people believe that it is the wish of Hashem that we not be here, but rather the Land should be under control of ISIS or anyone else besides the Jewish nation.

The unfortunate conclusion is that every well-meaning Jew who stays in the galut, whether he intends it or not, contributes to these anti-Torah beliefs. Your very presence in the galut is understood as a declaration that it is not the wish of HaShem that His children return to the Holy land. And there is nothing further from the truth than this.

Urgent Plea: Save Your Children!

I must repeat what I have written so often in the past 13 years that these weekly articles have appeared – but now with a greater sense of urgency.

In the near future, the United States will revise its Selective Service Law (draft) to fill the ranks of the military and of the internal security services which are now being set into place. So instead of your young sons and daughters coming to study in Yeshivot with names like: Hakotel, Netiv Aryeh, Kerem Be'Yavne etc., and girls to the seminaries of Har Nof – or being accompanied by their parents under the chuppah, the dedicated Yiddishe mamas and tattes will be accompanying their children to the Port Authority Bus Terminal for their children's trips to places with names like: Fort Knox, Camp Pendleton, Quantico, Lejeune and Parris Island. After basic training, they will be shipped to serve in the Middle East in Iraq, Syria, and the Gulf States – anywhere except in Israel.

When the law becomes effective, children between the ages of

14 and 28 will not be permitted to leave the country, as was the case in the past. Send your children to live in Israel now, and then follow them as soon as possible.

These are not empty words.

Gemar Chatima Tova

Nachman Kahana

Copyright © 5775/2014 Nachman Kahana