

Devarim 5771

BS"D Parashat Devarim 5771

Part A:

As a responsible Rav, leader and father figure, it was Moshe's responsibility to shower praise on the nation for the good they did, and to reprimand and reproach them when they strayed from the Torah's directives.

The overriding theme of this week's parasha is Moshe's balanced and tempered admonishment of the nation, delivered at the onset of his farewell address to the people he had transformed into the greatest nation on earth.

"Balanced and tempered," because the severity of many of the nation's actions during their forty-year trek in the desert deserved harsh reprimands, not just the "light" allusions and innuendos that Moshe voiced.

But if Moshe Rabbeinu would be with us today, I am quite sure that even his boundless composure and perseverance would be taxed by our government's faltering, fumbling hesitancy and indecisiveness in the matter of settling the West Bank. I use the term "West Bank" to refer to the whole western side of the Jordan River up to the Mediterranean Sea, because it is the twin of the Jewish "East Bank" occupied today by the Saudi Arabian Bedouin House of Abdallah, by invitation of the British mandatory authorities who gave away what was not theirs.

Why do I suggest that Moshe Rabbeinu would be the most upset?

Recall in the Book of Shemot, when Yitro and his daughter Tzipora – Moshe's wife – and their two sons left Midian to join with Moshe in the desert. Parashat Yitro relates that Yitro became very aroused and agitated when Moshe related the

many incidents when HaShem saved the Jewish people prior to and after their leaving Egypt. Our rabbis explain that since Yitro was part of Paro's inner circle, he was privy to State secrets, including Paro's "final solution" of the Jewish problem. At Moshe's mention of a miracle, Yitro related it to a particular decision made by Paro against the Jewish people. After going through the long list of parallel miracles and diabolical Egyptian plans, it was plain to see how the hand of God was at work for the Jewish people. That lesson was not lost on Moshe, nor on any of the God fearing people within the Jewish nation.

So what would Moshe, who knew so well HaShem's principle of "mida ke'neged mida" (a measure for a measure), be telling us today?

In 2008, the United States underwent an economic crisis that continues to this day – with no respite in sight. The economic indicators of unemployment, GNP, available credit, the trade deficit and national debt are depressing. Just this week, Congress was forced to raise the national debt limit by another 2.1 trillion (a trillion has 12 zeros) permitting the US government to owe \$16,000,000,000,000 and change, and there is no end to the numbers. To make this a bit more meaningful, for every dollar spent by the US government, 42 cents of it is borrowed money.

Today, Moshe would have a simple message for the American government and people. He would point out that the bottom dropped out of the American economy on the background of housing, with their defaulted mortgages, derivatives and sub derivatives, etc.

This was Hashem's "measure for a measure". This American President, as well as past presidents, warned the Governments of Israel to refrain from building in our Eretz Yisrael.

To this end, the American consulate in Jerusalem daily sends

out its cars and helicopters to make certain that Sarah did not add another toilet to her kindergarten in Yitzhar or that a caravan was not placed on a forsaken hillside near Kedumim.

The God of Israel has declared that for every unbuilt home in our West Bank, 50 American banks will close in their WEST. For every young couple who wishes to make their life in the hilltops of the Shomron but cannot do so because the US government deems Jewish building there to be illegal, there will be 10,000 unemployed couples in the United States.

Moshe's advice to the American people would be: "Do not just permit our fearful government to build in the West Bank. Force them to do so for your own good. Send your contractors from Iraq and Afghanistan to build the roads and infrastructure all over the Holy Land for the resettling of the Jewish people in their Biblical land. If you will do so, the God of Israel will open the floodgates of prosperity for your people. But if you continue to choke them, there will always be salvation for them from another source; but the United States will never recover."

This is the message Moshe Rabbeinu would deliver to the United States and to the world in general. The world must wake up to the basic fact of history: never has a nation, exiled from its land, returned to their ancient homeland after many generations, as we the Jewish nation have done.

Here is the **not-so-invisible** hand of HaShem in history.

Part B:

What's in a name?

If your parents named you Abe or Zachary, Abigail or Zlota there really isn't too much to your name. But if they named you Avraham, Zacharia, Aviga'yil or Zahava then they were recipients of a "minor prophecy" – as stated in certain Jewish mystical works – that a Hebrew name mirrors the root of a

child's neshama (soul).

Moshe Rabbeinu was entrusted by Hashem to complete two missions in his life: 1- To raise up the downtrodden, enslaved and loosely-connected children of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov to become the most exalted nation on earth, and 2- To serve as HaShem's ambassador in delivering His Holy Torah to Am Yisrael – the spiritual heirs of the world's greatest spiritual leaders Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov. And it would forever be its task to bring honor to the Creator of Heaven and Earth in the performance of His Holy Torah.

To this end HaShem, who knows all, created the circumstances whereby Moshe's father was named Amram and his mother Yocheved.

Amram is comprised of the two words 'AM' meaning nation and 'RAM' meaning exalted. Yocheved comprises the two letters 'YO' (yud and vav in HaShem's four letter name) and CAVOD meaning honor.

Moshe acquired his spiritual strength to create an exalted nation that would dedicate its very essence to bringing honor to HaShem from his holy parents.

As for Moshe's name: I wrote in parashat Pinchas, Moshe was the name given to him by Batya, the Egyptian princess who saved him as a baby from the river . Moshe in ancient Egyptian means "to draw out from water". HaShem chose to call him by this name only, because it constituted the essence of Moshe's destiny: that his mission in life would be to **draw the Jewish people out from slavery**, but not merit to bring them into Eretz Yisrael.

We are called Yisrael, which is the name our father Ya'akov was given when he defeated the angel of Aisav. The word means one who has fought and been victorious over men and angels.

Over the 4000-year course of Jewish history, we have fought

and defeated many men, nations and empires. We have also fought and were victorious in the spiritual challenges of “gentile angels” who have forever sought to tear us away from our enduring faith in HaShem.

The founding fathers of the Medina experienced a “minor prophecy” when they named the emerging State “Medinat Yisrael”.

The message HaShem was sending to them was that this ancient people was about to embark upon the greatest adventure of its 4000-year history. It would begin with the return home of millions of Jews from the four corners of our exile. We would throw off the trappings of our exile experience and again become one people with one Torah, one language, one dedicated army – a nation with one common destiny.

We would be victorious over the men and nations that seek to curse that which Hashem has blessed. We would be victorious in the religious and ideological challenges set before us by Christianity and Islam.

Indeed! Am Yisrael will be victorious over men and angels!

This d'var Torah is dedicated to the memory of my uncle Harav Mordechai ben Harav Nachman Kahana of Tzfat zt"l, whose yahrtzeit is on the 3rd of Menachem Av. In addition to being a talmid chacham, Rav Mordechai was a paragon of midot tovot (virtuous personal conduct). He paid the price of mesirat nefesh (total dedication) for Eretz Yisrael, when his wife Tziphora a"h – my aunt, her mother and two of my cousins from another branch of the family were murdered in 1938, on their way back to Tzfat from a wedding in Haifa. When learning of the murder of their mother, two sons – Moshe and Baruch David – left their yeshiva studies to join the underground (Etzel – Irgun Ze'va'ie Le'umi) where they fought the British and Arabs until Israel's independence in 1948.

May they all be united in bonds of eternal life.

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

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