

Devarim 5777

BS"D Parashat Devarim 5777

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Does God love or hate you?

The book of Devarim begins with Moshe Rabbeinu's farewell address to the nation, that began on Rosh Chodesh Shevat and terminated 37 days later with Moshe's demise on the 7th of Adar.

Moshe stood before the nation 40 years after HaShem had commanded him to lead a ragtag assortment of millions of freed slaves, whose only connection was their common ancestry to those who had descended hundreds of years earlier to Egypt from the land of Canaan.

Now, the descendants of those slaves stood before Moshe as God's chosen people. Twelve tribes hallowed by HaShem at Sinai and sanctified by the forty years of Torah study and fulfillment of mitzvot under Moshe's tutelage.

Moshe peered out over the Jewish encampment that extended as far as he could see. In the center stood the holy Mishkan. To the north were the tribes of Dan, Naftali and Asher; to the south were Re'uven, Shimon and Gad; to the east the tribes of Yehuda, Yissachar and Zevulun; and to the west Efrayim, Menashe and Binyamin.

Immediately surrounding the Mishkan to the north, south and west encamped the families of the tribe of Levi. To the east, near the entrance to the Mishkan, were Moshe, Aharon and their

immediate families.

Moshe begins by reviewing their major experiences over the last 40 years. He reminds the nation of the terrible spiritual decline of their parents' generation: from pure belief in HaShem to the depths of rebellion, and says (Devarim 1,27):

וַיִּשְׁפָּט מֹשֶׁה אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם 'וְעַתָּה יָדַעְתֶּם כִּי-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה
וְעַתָּה יָדַעְתֶּם כִּי-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה

You complained in your tents and said, "HaShem hates us; so, he brought us out of Egypt to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us".

The episode of the Meraglim (scouts) is degrading enough, but how could they have thought that HaShem "hates" Jews?

Can HaShem who called the Jewish nation בְּרִיךְ אֲבוֹתַי אֲבִי – my first born son, hate his own son? There are many sources that reiterate HaShem's love for His people, including the blessing we say at the Arvit (evening) prayer: בְּרִיךְ אֲבוֹתַי 'וְעַתָּה יָדַעְתֶּם
כִּי-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה- Blessed are You HaShem who loves his nation Yisrael!

Truth can be ugly

A man once traversed the land in search of absolute truth. He ventured into a faraway town, and as was his habit, asked if anyone there knew the truth of life? A townsman replied that there is rumor that on the nearby mountain there lives a woman who knows the truth. The man ascended the mountain where he saw the ugliest person he had ever seen. Her age could have

easily been 100 or 120. Any beauty which might have been hers was long ago lost, and she was a pitiful sight. He asked her if she is the woman who knows the truth? She replied that she is the personification of truth in the world. The young man stayed with her several months enraptured by her wisdom and revelations in every subject. After several months, he informed the woman that he must return to civilization. She understood, and requested a favor of the young man, "tell the world that I am young and beautiful".

The lesson here is that truth is often too ugly, stringent and biting for people to accept, and we prefer to relate to it only when it is enshrouded with a cosmetic veneer.

This was the fate of the illustrious Babylonian Amora Rabbah Bar Bar Chana at his initial meeting with the illustrious Eretz Yisrael Amora Raish Lakish after crossing the Jordan River into Eretz Yisrael, as stated in the Gemara (Yoma 9b):

רַבָּה בַּר בַּר חַנָּה .רַבִּי לָקִישׁ רָאִישׁ הָאָרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל ,וְרַבָּה בַּר בַּר חַנָּה בָּבְלִי ,וְרַבָּה בַּר בַּר חַנָּה בָּבְלִי
בָּבְלִי וְרַבָּה בַּר בַּר חַנָּה בָּבְלִי ,וְרַבָּה בַּר בַּר חַנָּה בָּבְלִי !וְרַבָּה :וְרַבָּה
בָּבְלִי וְרַבָּה בָּבְלִי וְרַבָּה בָּבְלִי ,וְרַבָּה בָּבְלִי וְרַבָּה בָּבְלִי וְרַבָּה בָּבְלִי
וְרַבָּה בָּבְלִי ,וְרַבָּה בָּבְלִי וְרַבָּה בָּבְלִי ,וְרַבָּה בָּבְלִי - וְרַבָּה בָּבְלִי וְרַבָּה בָּבְלִי
.וְרַבָּה בָּבְלִי וְרַבָּה בָּבְלִי וְרַבָּה בָּבְלִי וְרַבָּה בָּבְלִי

Resh Lakish was swimming in the Jordan. Rabbah Bar Bar Hana came from Babylon and offered him his hand. Resh Lakish refused and said: to him: "God hates you. For it is written: "If it is a wall, we will build upon her a turret of silver; if it is a door, we will enclose it with boards of cedar" (meaning) – Had you (your ancestors who were exiled to Babylon) made yourself like a (permanent) wall and had all come up in the days of Ezra, you would have been compared to silver, which no rottenness can ever affect (the Second Temple would not have been destroyed). However, since they

come up like doors (which swing open and close with no permanency) you are like cedarwood, which rottenness prevails over (and the Second Temple was destroyed).

Raish Lakish did not mince words. The ugly, stringent and biting truth came out without a politically correct, cosmetic and polite veneer. There are Jews whom HaShem does not love, to put it mildly. They are the Jews who steadfastly refuse to return home to be part of HaShem's master plan for the world, that begins with the Jews in Eretz Yisrael.

A holy nation

Moshe was aware that he was a partner with HaShem in forging the most far-reaching, ambitious revolution ever devised by the Creator. Every nation has individual greats who rose through the mundane and egotistical ranks of society to etch a name for themselves in the annals of that nation. However, HaShem's agenda for the Jewish nation was far different.

Moshe Rabbeinu descended from Mount Sinai with the revolutionary message that HaShem intends to create...

□□□□ □□□□ □□□□□ □□□□□

A priestly kingdom and a holy nation

Not a nation that gives rise to an individual luminary once every 200 years, but a nation where all its people – men, women and children alike – are righteous and holy.

This unique nation could evolve only in the land that HaShem had designated for this ideal, and blessed it with immense dimensions of spirituality not found in any other place of the world.

It had to be the Torah of HaShem, fulfilled by the nation chosen of HaShem, in the land blessed by HaShem.

Being loved by HaShem

HaShem in His wisdom created a six-thousand-year tug-of-war between the Jews and gentiles, each pulling at Eretz Yisrael. The Jewish nation pulls the land towards themselves, while the gentile nations make every attempt to rend it violently from the Jews.

The Jews who are in the holy land provide strength to HaShem's side, the Jews who prefer to stay in gentile lands strengthen the anti-HaShem side. Only those who contribute to furthering HaShem's agenda are loved by the Creator.

The prophet Zecharia 2:5-17:

:אֲנִי אֶבְרָכְךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ (א)

אֲנִי אֶבְרָכְךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ (א)
:אֲנִי אֶבְרָכְךָ אֵלֶיךָ

:אֲנִי אֶבְרָכְךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ (א)

אֲנִי אֶבְרָכְךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ (א)
:אֲנִי אֶבְרָכְךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ

אֲנִי אֶבְרָכְךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ (א)

אֲנִי אֶבְרָכְךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ (א)

: 'וּן אַתָּה אַתָּה

וְאֵלֶיךָ אֶתְּחַנֵּן וְאֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן (וְאֵלֶיךָ)

וְאֵלֶיךָ אֶתְּחַנֵּן וְאֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן (וְאֵלֶיךָ)

: וְאֵלֶיךָ אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן

'וּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן (וְאֵלֶיךָ)

וְאֵלֶיךָ אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן

: 'וּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן (וְאֵלֶיךָ)

וְאֵלֶיךָ אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן (וְאֵלֶיךָ)

: וְאֵלֶיךָ אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן

: וְאֵלֶיךָ אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן (וְאֵלֶיךָ)

וְאֵלֶיךָ אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן אֶתְּחַנֵּן (וְאֵלֶיךָ)

And I (Zecharia) looked up, and there before me was an (angel in the form of a) man with a measuring line in his hand. I asked, "Where are you going?"

He answered me, "To measure Jerusalem, to find out how wide and how long it is."

While the angel who was speaking to me was leaving, another angel came to meet him, and said to him: "Run, tell that young man (Zecharia, that you have erred because), 'Jerusalem will be a city without walls (and will not be measured) because of the great number of people and animals in it. And I myself (HaShem) will be a wall of fire around it,' declares the Lord, 'and I will be its glory within.'

"Come! Come! Flee from the land of the north," declares the Lord, "for I have scattered you to the four winds of heaven (lands of our exile)," declares the Lord.

“Come, Zion! Escape, you who live in Daughter Babylon! (a metaphor for all the lands of our exile). And Zecharia continues. For this is what the Lord Almighty says: “After the Glorious One has sent me (Zecharia to give prophecy) against the nations that have plundered you for whoever touches you (Yisrael) touches (destroys) the apple of his eye. I will surely raise my hand against them so that their slaves (the Moslem infiltrators) will plunder them. Then you will know that the Lord Almighty has sent me.

“Shout and be glad, Daughter Zion. For I am coming, and I will live among you,” declares the Lord. ¹¹ “Many nations will be joined with the Lord in that day and will become my people. (however) I will live (only) among you and you will know that the Lord Almighty has sent me to you. ¹² The Lord will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land and will again choose Jerusalem. ¹³ (enemies of Israel) Be still before the Lord (out of fear) so too all mankind, because He has roused himself from his holy dwelling.”

Zecharia was sent by HaShem to inform the nation that HaShem dwells only with His people in Eretz Yisrael.

One cannot escape the centrality of Torah in Eretz Yisrael as HaShem’s reason for creating the world. Whosoever wishes to be loved by our Father-in-Heaven has no choice but to be in His promised land, as Moshe Rabbeinu so much longed to be.

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

Copyright © 5777/2017 Nachman Kahana