

Devarim 5779

BS"D Parashat Devarim 5779

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Beyond Tish'a Be'Av

The Midrash on parashat Vayaishev states with regard to the selling of Yosef by his brothers:

וְהָיוּ הַלְוִיִּם וְהַיִּזְרְעֵלִי וְהַיִּזְרְעֵלִי , וְהָיוּ הַלְוִיִּם וְהַיִּזְרְעֵלִי וְהַיִּזְרְעֵלִי
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The tribes (brothers) were engaged in selling Yosef; Yosef was immersed in his sack (worn as a sign of mourning) and his sorrow; Reuven was immersed in his sack and sorrow; Ya'akov was immersed in his sack and sorrow; Yehuda was busy choosing a wife: and the Holy One Blessed Be He was indulging in creating the light of the Mashiach.

Herein lies a profound principle regarding our relationship with the Creator; that even in situations where individuals act in ways very far from godliness, HaShem is behind the scene advancing His own agenda for the redemption of Am Yisrael.

The lesson to be learned is that when catastrophe strikes, look beyond the immediate grief and try to discover the invisible hand of HaShem. You will probably not succeed, but the very attempt is an affirmation of your belief in the

intimate relationship between the Creator and His chosen creations – Am Yisrael.

The Spark will be ignited

Religious Zionists view military service as the fulfillment of an essential mitzva in view of the life-threatening dangers facing our nation from the Arab and Moslem peoples.

Was it not Moshe who angrily charged the tribes of Reuven and Gad:

:וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמְעוּ הָעָם וְהָיוּ מִלְחָמָה וְהָיָה אִתְּכֶם וְהָיָה אִתְּכֶם

Would your brothers go to war while you sit here?

Was it not Devorah the Shofetet (judge) who denounced the people of Meroz for evading the call to defend the nation! (Shoftim 5,23):

...וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמְעוּ הָעָם וְהָיוּ מִלְחָמָה וְהָיָה אִתְּכֶם וְהָיָה אִתְּכֶם

Curse Meroz said the angel of the Lord. Curse its people because they did not come to help the Lord

The chareidi sector is opposed to universal conscription but very much splintered in the reasons for their objections. The most extreme elements claim that the Medina was born in sin and has no right to exist and would welcome the return of some foreign entity – even the Arabs to rule over the land until the Mashiach appears. Another group claims that since the sins of the secular are responsible for our security problems, it is only right that they serve. The more enlightened chareidim

claim that their Torah study is protecting the Medina no less than Tzahal.

These are the major participants in the debate; but as with the episode of Yosef and his brothers, where is Hashem and His agenda?

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

Moshe stood before the nation forty years after HaShem had commanded him to take charge of a ragtag assortment of slaves, whose only connection was their common ancestors who had descended hundreds of years previously to Egypt from the land of Canaan.

But now, the descendants of those slaves stand before him 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 was aware of the fact that he was responsible for realizing the most far-reaching and ambitious revolution ever devised by the Creator. History records great men among the world's population – among them, the Torah cites Shet, Chanoch and Noach – and closer to our times, men like the American Abraham Lincoln and Mahatma Ghandi of India. Every nation has its 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 wants to create

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A priestly kingdom and a holy nation

Not a nation which gives rise to individual luminaries arising once every 200 years, but a nation where all the people – men, women and children alike – are righteous and holy scholars.

Moshe first encountered the Jewish people when they were at the lowest end of the kedusha (sanctity) spectrum. But now standing before him were millions of men, women and children who would answer to the description of a priestly kingdom and a holy nation.

This lofty ambition was realized during the generations of David and Shlomo, and probably during the reign of King Chizkiyahu. But over time, the realities of life's temptations and allurements, introduced to our people by our contact with gentiles, brought many of the nation to betray the great ideal of our Father in Heaven. Retribution was not far in coming, and we suffered the destruction of two Batei Mikdash and exile.

After 2000 years of exile, HaShem has returned the majority of His (halachic) children to Eretz Yisrael. And we find ourselves in a situation where the spiritual greatness of our nation exists in its potential, waiting to rise to the surface in fulfillment of Hashem's ambitious agenda for us. How will it occur?

Over the last 100 years, the Jewish people have reclaimed the land, drained the swamps and marshes, built cities and created a modern society second to none. We cover the land from Metula to Eilat, from the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean. The Jews in Eretz Yisrael are among the most moral people on Earth. However, that is not enough – we must be a priestly kingdom and a holy nation.

Spread out over the land are isolated islands of supercharged kedusha – hundreds of yeshivot dotting the land with their

tens of thousands of Torah students.

HaShem's agenda is to create bridges from these islands to the mainland of the general population, over which the Torah will become available to all.

The most logical and sensitive place to begin with is the military. Two religious men in a machlaka (company) guarantee that prayers will be said three times a day in a minyan. Ten in a pluga (4 companies) will remove the unsightly pictures from the walls and lower the level of unwanted language. I have seen it, I have done it.

The chareidi leadership will scream and protest claiming religious persecution. The hordes will protest before the Israeli consulate in Manhattan, and some extreme elements here and abroad will have stated their claims with expressions which could be taken from the Nazi paper Der Sturmer.

But the fact remains that whenever the religious and secular meet – be it in the army or in the workplace – the spark of Yiddishkeit in the secular becomes ignited.

The Jews in the galut will disappear into oblivion, and all the Jews in Eretz Yisrael will do teshuva and will share in the blessings inherent in the words of our holy prophets.

Our young men will serve in HaShem's army and will return to their yeshivot or to the workplace. Their presence in all walks of society will contribute to bringing about the old-new revolution of Am Yisrael in Eretz Yisrael to become a priestly kingdom and a holy nation.

Despite the expletives and condemnation of many of the chareidi leadership who are unable to see beyond their bet midrash and are unable to conceptualize HaShem's great vision of a holy nation, the will of HaShem will be done, as stated by the prophet Zecharia 10:

וְיִשְׁמְרוּ אֶת הַבְּרִית בֵּין יְהוָה וּבֵין הָעָם וְיִשְׁמְרוּ אֶת הַבְּרִית בֵּין יְהוָה וּבֵין הָעָם (וְ
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"I will strengthen Judah and save the tribes of Joseph. I will restore them because I have compassion on them.

They will be as though I had not rejected them, for I am the Lord their God and I will answer them.

The Ephraimites will become like warriors, and their hearts will be glad as with wine. Their children will see it and be joyful; their hearts will rejoice in the Lord.

I will signal for them and gather them in. Surely I will redeem them; they will be as numerous as before.

Though I scatter them among the peoples, yet in distant lands

they will remember me. They and their children will survive, and they will return.

I will bring them back from Egypt and gather them from Assyria. I will bring them to Gilead and Lebanon, and there will not be room enough for them.

They will pass through the sea of trouble; the surging sea will be subdued and all the depths of the Nile will dry up. Assyria's pride will be brought down and Egypt's scepter will pass away.

I will strengthen them in the Lord and in His name they will live securely," declares the Lord.

As Zecharia prophesied, 'The depths of the Nile will dry up. Assyria's pride will be brought down and Egypt's scepter will pass away'. Egypt is the land of the Nile. The deposed President Morsi voiced his nation's sentiments when he declared that if there is no Nile there is no Egypt. Not only is Egypt presently in a war between its fanatical Islamists and the secular public; but when Ethiopia activates its high dam, "the depths of the Nile will dry up".

Ancient Assyria extended its borders to parts of what is today's Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran. These four lands are in deep trouble and will continue to sink into the quicksand of history. This, too, is a major part of HaShem's agenda being played out behind the scenes.

May we all merit to see Am Yisrael actualize the great

spiritual potential inherent in every one of us and rejoice in the destruction of all of the enemies of Am Yisrael, beginning with Yishmael and continuing with Eisav of Europe and that ilk.

Shabbat Shalom and a meaningful fast,

Nachman Kahana

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