

Devarim Shabbat Chazon 5772

BS"D Parashat Devarim Shabbat Chazon 5772

Part A:

Many of the lamentable chapters we read on Tish'a B'Av were composed by Yehudah HaLevi (1080-1141), one of our greatest poets, who lived in Spain when it was under Islamic rule. He was a talmid chacham, a physician and a philosopher. Yehuda HaLevi longed for Eretz Yisrael, but when he finally reached Yerushalayim, an Arab horseman trampled him to death as he knelt for the first time before the Kotel.

In his poem "Zion" (Eretz Yisrael), Yehuda HaLevi expresses his profound love for the Holy Land and in particular for Yerushalayim. He writes:



Who can provide me with wings? I would fly to you.

I would cause my shattered heart to reside amidst your shattered ruins.

In his classic work, "The Kuzari", Yehuda HaLevi states:



Yerushalayim will be rebuilt when the Children of Israel will yearn in earnest (for the holy city), and then (HaShem) will have compassion even on its stones and dust.

Part B:

As quoted above, Yehuda HaLevi writes:

*... I would fly to you. I would cause my **shattered heart** to reside amidst your **shattered ruins**".*

He uses the word ?? (BTR) with poetic license to mean "shattered," however the literal meaning is a cut or slice.

In the Torah, the first usage of the word BTR describes the intimate, unbreakable covenant that HaShem enters into with our father Avraham, who acts as the agent for all his future offspring who would be born of Yitzchak and Ya'akov and thereafter. It is called Brit bein Ha'Betarim – the Covenant of the Cut (severed) Pieces, as related in Beraishiet (15:7-18):



And HaShem said to him (Avram), "I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land as an inheritance (for future generations).

But Avram said, Sovereign Lord, how shall I know that I will gain possession of it?

HaShem said to him, "Bring me a calf, a goat and a ram, each three years old [according to most commentators] along with a dove and a young pigeon.

Avram brought all these, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other. The birds, however, he did not cut in half.

The prophet Yirmiyahu 34:18 states:



Those who have violated My covenant and have not fulfilled the terms of the covenant they made before Me, by cutting the calf in two and walked between its pieces, Then birds of prey

came down on the carcasses, but Avram drove them away.

As the sun was setting, Avram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him.

Then HaShem said to him, "Know for certain that, for four hundred years, your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there.

But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions.

You, however, will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at an old age.

In the fourth generation your descendants will return, for the sins of the Amorites have not yet reached their full measure.

When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces.

On that day, HaShem made a covenant with Avram and said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates.

Why did Hashem choose severed animals as the physical expression of His covenant with the Jewish nation, and why did He have Avram walk between the pieces?

I suggest:

The trademark song of Breslav chassidim states: "The whole world is a very narrow bridge".

The path between the severed animals was very narrow indeed.

HaShem was telling Avram that he was free not to enter

Hashem's covenant. However, if he would agree in his own name and for all Avram's progeny, then Avram must know that life would be a very narrow bridge. Gentiles are what they are, but the Jewish nation will be scrutinized from cradle to grave. Their thoughts, actions and intentions will be held to a standard never before effectuated in the world. Spiritual success would be greatly rewarded in this world and beyond; failure will be severely punished. The Jewish nation will have very little room to maneuver, just as the path between the divided animals is restricted.

There would be little room for excuses or error. And just as a wrong step between the carcasses would bring Avraham face-to-face with death, so too would the sins of the Chosen Nation bring upon them destruction, exile, suffering and death.

Part C:

Religious communities in the galut, under the leadership of their spiritual guides, are about to commit a sin of unprecedented proportions.

The Gemara in Yuma, quoted in the Rambam, describes the protocol of teshuva.

If one neglects to perform a mitzvat eh'sai – a mitvza that requires one to be active, (i.e., tefillin where there is no Karet punishment of early death and further punishment in the world to come) – a feeling of remorse and resolution not to repeat the sin pardons the transgressor. If one performs a lo ta'asai (prohibited act whose punishment is 39 makot [lashes]; i.e., eating milk and meat cooked together), remorse and resolution will withhold punishment, and pardon will come on the day of Yom Kippur.

If the lo ta'asai is punishable by Karet, remorse, resolution and the day of Yom Kippur will withhold punishment; but pardon is conditional on the transgressor having to endure difficulties in life.

However, a sin which includes chillul HaShem (desecration of the Holy Name) is so severe that although remorse, resolution, Yom Kippur and difficulties in life will together avoid punishment in this world, pardon will be possible only upon the death of the transgressor.

There are many examples of chillul Hashem, but the classic one is when a well-known rabbinic personality acts in a way that brings shame to God's Holy Name or distorts HaShem's Holy Torah. The chillul Hashem increases incrementally when two rabbis perform the transgression, and increases exponentially when it is done by 90,000 religious Jews together.

Next week, in a stadium in New Jersey, it is estimated that this will be the number of participants in the mass siyum (conclusion) of the last seven-year daf hayomi cycle.

It will be a worldwide production of many rabbis, roshei yeshiva, and grand rabbis who will draw in good and innocent Jews into the most publicized chillul HaShem ever undertaken.

Close to one hundred thousand observant Jews will declare before the world that God did not give us the Holy Land.

In one hand they will hold up the tractate of Ketubot in which the Talmud declares that a Jew who willingly lives in the galut is as if he has no God.

They will make a mockery of the Gemara (Ketubot 112b) in which Rabbi Chiya ben Gamda rolled on the ground of Eretz Yisrael in keeping with the verse in (Tehilim 102)



For her servants desired its stones;

and they shall treasure its soil

One's very presence at this chillul Hashem intimates – to the

United States, to the United Nations, to the Arab League, to Hamas, to Hizbullah, to the engineers now producing the Iranian bomb, to the world – that Eretz Yisrael is some distant dreamland that will be actualized when the Mashiach comes, but is Arab Palestine until then. This is no exaggeration, this is real life.

My fellow Jews in the galut: If you value your Judaism, celebrate the new daf hayomi cycle privately, modestly – and even shamefully – in the place where you reside.

Compare the lack of ideals and lack of religious passion of the nearly one million observant Jews living a pseudo-Jewish life in the United States, with the words of Yehuda Halevi:

*Who can provide me with wings? I would fly to you. I would
cause my shattered heart to reside amidst your shattered
ruins*

*And: Yerushalayim will be rebuilt when the Children of Israel
will yearn in earnest (for the holy city), and then (HaShem)
will have compassion even on its stones and dust*

The soul of the saintly Rav Meir Shapiro of Lublin zt"l, who initiated the daf hayomi study, will not be in New Jersey. It will be here in Eretz Yisrael hovering over the authentic, sincere part of our nation; the part which is of one mind and heart with Yehuda Halevi.

For the Jews in the United States, I say: Be proud of your Judaism. Stay away from the colossal chillul HaShem – desecration of the Holy Name about to be perpetrated in front of the eyes of the world. Be able to tell your grandchildren that you were **not** there.

My voice is but a small, shrill call compared to the cacophonous call of the religious leaders in the galut for good Jews to show up in force and sanctify the Holy Name.

I leave it to you, dear reader, to decide who is sanctifying the Holy Name and who is defiling the Holy Name?

On the night of Tish'a B'av, as you sit and weep for the destruction of the Temples and the exile of our fathers and mothers to foreign lands, think. Today there are 6 million Jews in Eretz Yisrael with the gates open for all Jews to return home. Is this not the sanctification of the Holy Name? Then the Holy Name is being defiled by those who refuse to recognize their religious responsibilities by their clinging to their lives in the galut!

May we all merit to meet in Eretz Yisrael and go up to the Temple Mount to the rebuilt Bet HaMikdash.

Nachman Kahana

Copyright © 5772/2012