

Emor 5780

BS"D Parashat 5780

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Will Anti-Semitism and COVID-19 be enough?

PIRKEI AVOT 2:5:

אם אין אדם אחראי, אדם אחר יאחראי...
If there is no responsible person, another person will be responsible...

"... and where there are no (responsible) people to be found, try to fill the void"

And its corollary:

If there is another who can do the job better or even as well as you, find yourself greener pastures where you can contribute your talents.

HaShem appointed Aharon and his four sons and their future generations, to be an exclusive entity within the tribe of Levi. They were the first to begin the unending Kohanic lineage to this day.

Despite the fact that the Kohanim were granted 24 types of matanot (gifts) and the Levi'im 10% of the grains, grapes and

olive crops, the extended tribe of Levi was denied a homestead in Eretz Yisrael – making them dependent on the good will of the general population. It goes without saying that one who has no land in an agricultural society is destined to a life of economic “mediocrity”.

HaShem did this for the purpose of establishing an intimate connection with the tribe of Levi, as stated in Devarim 10:8-9:

At that time, HaShem set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of His covenant (and the Kohanim) to stand before HaShem to minister and to pronounce blessings in His name to this very day. Hence, the tribe of Levi will not share in the land with their fellow Jews, for their legacy will be the closeness to HaShem as He declared.

To be a part of HaShem’s legacy is to be instilled with a sense of mission and a call to duty. It is to bring atonement to the sinner through his teshuva and sacrifices in the Mishkan and Bet Hamikdash, and uppermost, to serve as a living example of what a Jew must be. These are not simple tasks in a world that negates the unique spiritual values that the Jewish people were commanded at Mount Sinai.

In my parent’s home, we were very aware of our Kohanic birthright. It began with the family name Kahana and was confirmed every time we recited the Kohanic blessing on Yom Tov and could not attend funerals and had limited entries into hospitals. Upon reaching the dating stage our father z”l reminded us quite emphatically who we could and could not marry. This was in keeping with the tradition of the Kahana family of Tzfat stemming from previous generations of venerable rabbis all the way back to Ezra HaSofer (the Scribe) who rebuilt the Second Temple with returnees from the Babylonian exile.

As a young student attending Chareidi yeshivot in NY, where an

apathetic and even an anti-Israel spirit reigned, I knew that Judaism is an indestructible and incorruptible triangle whose angles are: Torah observance; the people who comprise Am Yisrael, and the holy land of Eretz Yisrael. All three are imperative in fulfilling HaShem's plan of forging an Am Kadosh – a holy nation. Torah observance without compromise; maintaining a deep concern and feeling of family for every Jew born of a Jewish mother or halachically converted, even when his ideas conflict with mine, and our physical presence in the holy land.

For the last 18 years, I have been writing divrei Torah for people in the Medina covering the major issues in our collective Israeli lives; and for the Jews in galut it has been variations on the same theme – to leave the cursed galut and come home. (18 years x 50 weeks = 900 messages). I have no way of measuring how successful my messages have been, but one thing is clear to me: no one wanted the job of confronting the erudite rabbanim in galut, so I felt the need to fill the void. Along the way, I have had my share of controversy and criticism, but never doubted the principles I believe in.

But the time has arrived when I perceive elements out there that can do the job of encouraging Jews to return home much more efficiently, effectively, and quickly than I. They are an unbridled resurgence of anti-Semitism even in democratic countries, and the trauma of Covid-19, which has created a claustrophobic feeling among many at the closing of the gates to the Holy Land and aroused in them the need to come home now. Indeed, anti-Semitism and calamity can encourage aliya much more efficiently than I.

So I will redirect the major thrust of my divrei Torah to my brothers and sisters here in HaShem's 4 amot (private fiefdom) and the issues that affect us, and let the anti-Semites and biological entities do their work in the galut and hope that our brothers and sisters do not suffer too much before they wake up.

Be careful. Be healthy. BE HERE!

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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