

Kedoshim 5776

BS"D Parashat Kedoshim 5776

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Deception: Theft, Denial & Swearing Falsely

Our parsha warns of the evils of deception (Vayikra 19,11-12):

לֹא תִגְדֹּל וְלֹא תִשָּׁבַע בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְעִוְבֹתֶיךָ וְלֹא תִשָּׁבַע בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְעִוְבֹתֶיךָ וְלֹא תִשָּׁבַע בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְעִוְבֹתֶיךָ

11 Do not steal. And do not deny falsely. And do not deceive one another.

12 Do not swear falsely by My name and so profane the name of your God. I am the Lord.

Rashi explains the sequence within the pesukim – theft, denial, swearing falsely in HaShem's name. A thief will eventually deny his act and sustain his lie by swearing falsely using HaShem's name.

To steal is iniquitous. Denial of the theft is a sin accompanying the iniquity. Then to swear falsely using HaShem's name is the thief attempting to make the Almighty an accomplice to his vile conduct.

The lessons of this pasuk became very clear to me in an incident at the Rabbi Jacob Joseph High School in New York's Lower East Side. I was a student in the journalism class where we put together the yeshivah's monthly newspaper.

It was prohibited to go to the little cafe in the basement

during class time. I was once caught there by the assistant principal who was the yeshivah's disciplinarian. When he asked what I was doing there, I blurted out, "We're not doing anything now in the class." He brought me back to the classroom and told Mr. Brown, the teacher, what I said and then left the room.

While all my friends were waiting for the hatchet to come down, Mr. Brown looked straight at me and in a soft-but-determined voice delivered a lesson I would take with me my whole life – "Kahana. Don't pass the buck". Mr. Brown was saying that when I was caught, the right thing would have been to admit and accept the blame and punishment like a man.

In our parsha, the pasuk tells of a thief who was apprehended, and when brought before the court denied the theft. This would have been bad enough, but this criminal tried to cover up the crime by standing behind the safety net of HaShem by swearing falsely while evoking the holy name of HaShem. He had done the unforgivable; because by evoking the Holy Name, he sought to make HaShem his accomplice to the crime. I can hear the wise words of my teacher Mr. Brown about not passing the buck.

To stay away from Eretz Yisrael at this extraordinary and unprecedented time in our people's history is a sin. Those religious leaders in the galut who repress the natural desire of observant Jews to return home, use the holy Torah and distort, deform and deliberately fabricate its Godly intentions in the justification of that sin. This is intellectually and religiously heinous.

However, to use the Mashiach as the opiate to suppress one's inherent religious-national compulsions is traitorous to all the dreams, aspirations and prayers of millions of Jews over the last 2000 years.

Their call rings out from all the batei kneset and batei midrash in the galut, "Wait for the Mashiach. He will be God's

messenger to bring us home. In the meantime, it is sinful to initiate any act designed for self-emancipation from the galut”.

Those religious leaders in the galut live and propagate a lie while seeking to substantiate it through the truths of the Torah.

We in Eretz Yisrael are experiencing an inverse situation. Most of our political leaders are living God’s truth but support and sustain it through secular Zionism. It was a mighty force brought to the world in order to create the political entity of Medinat Yisrael, but its thunder is gone. The values of today’s democratic Western society espousing one vote for every person – Jew and Gentile, equality before the law for all people, freedom not to believe in God, moral relativity and liberal sanction of all types of perversity – are not suited for HaShem’s chosen nation.

The religious, moral and historical basis of our claim to the Holy Land and our continued presence here are the Torah and HaShem’s promise that His Holy Land shall be the possession of His chosen people – the Jewish nation’s private fiefdom forever.

So it appears that we in the Holy Land have a plus and a minus, matching the plus and minus of the Jews in the galut.

However, this is false as one can learn from an anecdote from the life of Winston Churchill. Once when appearing drunk in Parliament, a female MP remarked, “Mr. Prime Minister, you are drunk!” to which Churchill replied, “And you Madam are ugly... tomorrow I shall be sober.”

Of our two societies, we in Eretz Yisrael are temporarily drunk with Western values, whereas most of the thoughts and deeds of religious leaders in the galut are ugly.

Tomorrow, we in Eretz Yisrael shall be Jewishly sober.

To illustrate the perversity of the situation in the galut, I put forward a behavior that is damaging to the Jewish people and a simple question:

Torah-observing people condemn a Jew (man or woman) who commits his/her future to a gentile rather than to a Jewish spouse.

Why is this different from the more than one million observant Jews who refuse to cast their lot with their brothers and sisters in Eretz Yisrael, preferring to commit their future with the 330 million gentiles in the galut of the United States?

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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