

Ki Tavo 5779

BS"D Parashat Ki Tavo 5779

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Navigating with our periscope

A young man, son and grandson of a very special family, was just commissioned as a lieutenant after graduating our naval officers school and will serve on a submarine. He was honored in the community with a kiddush on Shabbat. He studied several years at the Bnei David Yeshiva in the settlement of Eli and decided that the time had come for him to actualize his love for Am Yisrael and Eretz Yisrael which he had acquired from his family and the yeshiva.

I addressed the young officer saying: "a submarine prowls in a hostile environment, deep below the water's surface. It is guided not by the senses of the crew, but by instruments created in a far different place than the sub itself. And when the commander wants to see the light of day, he says 'up periscope', and the beautiful sight of light and life comes into view. But in fact, we Jews are all submariners in a sense; because this material world is hostile to the holy neshama that HaShem has placed within us, and we navigate not by our senses but by the instrument called "Torah" that guides us to safe shores. And when we wish to see the light of our existence, we look through the periscope of Torah wisdom that takes us beyond the stark reality of our humble existence."

In a closed and threatening environment such as a submarine, there exists a bar or a level of anticipated performance from

the commander down to the most junior sailor, where each must perform at peak ability. So too Hashem anticipates that his nation will conduct itself in a very unified, unique manner.

These are exciting times

Rosh Hashana is quickly approaching and we who value life and the quality of life are making preparations to honor the highest court's subpoena to appear on the first day of Tishrei (and the second day by Rabbinic decree) for judgement. The court action will be followed on the tenth of Tishri by beseeching our heavenly Father and Judge for compassion, pity and clemency, if indeed on Rosh Hashana our conduct during the past year was found wanting.

We cannot fathom the depth of HaShem's judgement which takes into account our past, present, and future, and the implications of our actions on our own lives, on the lives of those close to us, and on the lives of those who we know – even faintly. It's like a three-tier chess game being played without the boards by memory alone.

However, we do know the criteria according to which HaShem judges the Jewish nation. HaShem sets a bar of behavior 613 mitzvot high for the Jews as a nation and quite lower for individuals, because no one can perform all the Torah mitzvot, many of which do not apply to all individuals. The bar consists of the 613 Torah mitzvot, Rabbinic decrees and local customs which are also halachically binding.

But the matter becomes confusing with regard to the bar of expectations that HaShem sets for gentiles. Well, one might say that the bar is placed seven Noachide mitzvot high. However, that is problematic in the face of the Gemara in Avoda Zara 2b that discusses the status of non-Jews vis a vis HaShem's requirement of them. After debating the issue, the

conclusion is reached that HaShem saw that as a group they are incapable of fulfilling even the basic seven Noachide mitzvot, so he retracted the requirement and replaced it with the principle that a gentile who performs one of the mitzvot would receive a reward as one who performs a voluntary mitzva, which is far less than the reward for one who performs a mitzva which is incumbent upon him.

So, this leaves the gentile world with no spiritual minimum requirement to even merit a bar. This is a bad situation. However, I suggest that HaShem did place a single compulsory mitzva on the nations of the world: it is the way in which they treat the Jewish people as individuals and as a nation.

Accordingly, world history can be reduced to one simple principle: a nation which is helpful to the Jews will prosper and flourish, whereas those who are detrimental to the Jews will descend from the stage of history and will be found only in museums, and the examples abound.

In our times we see phenomenon that seemingly contradicts this principle, that despite the cruelty of the Christian world of Europe and sadistic Islam they are flourishing today. But everything has a reason.

Both the Christian and Moslem worlds are opposed to our return to the holy land and are far from touching the bar that HaShem set for the gentiles. Nevertheless, both societies are large in population and in wealth because they have an important role in the not too distant future.

After they will join hands in attempting to expel the Jews from the holy land, they will destroy each other in a world war; that is; Esav and Ishmael will eliminate each other from the future history of mankind.

What is transpiring at this very time between Iran and Saudi Arabia, with worldwide repercussions, will not go away. Israel cannot escape the consequences, as we are at the crossroads of

three continents, Asia, Europe and Africa, right in the middle.

These are exciting times. No one can predict what will happen. Israel (hopefully) will have a new government after today's elections. HaShem's timing is coming through again.

The Jews of Eretz Yisrael can breathe a sigh of relief and thank HaShem that we are here to be major players in the future of the world.

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

Copyright © 5779/2019 Nachman Kahana