

Ki Tavo 5780

BS"D Parashat Ki Tavo 5780

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Creation and the Last Days

Within the scientific community, the present accepted theory of what transpired at the exact moment of creation is known as the Big Bang. Recent discoveries in astronomy and physics have shown beyond reasonable doubt that our universe had a beginning.

So, we can logically conclude that the beginning demands a prime mover, who is HaShem.

According to the standard theory, our universe sprang into existence from a tiny mass of intense gravitational pressure into itself, that was compressed into infinite density. At some point the infinite density exploded outwards and is continuing to do so to this very day. This theory is the outcome of combined scientific theories of the 20th century.

But let's look for a moment at the commentary of the great Ramban (Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman) on parashat Bereishiet, who established the following principles:

1- At the briefest instant of creation all the matter of the universe was concentrated in a place no larger than a grain of mustard.

2- Matter at that time was very thin, so intangible, that it did not have real substance. It did have, however, a potential

to gain substance and form, and to become tangible matter.

3- From the initial concentration of this intangible substance in its minute location, the substance expanded, expanding the universe as it did so. As the expansion progressed, a change in the substance occurred.

4- This initially thin, non-corporeal substance took on the tangible aspects of matter as we know it. From this initial act of creation, from this ethereal thin pseudo substance, everything that has existed, or will ever exist, was, is, and will be formed.

Amazing!

We can also conclude that at the exact instant of physical creation, HaShem established the rules, formulas, equations, modus operandi, principles, and specifications that would govern the acts of man and nature. That two atoms of hydrogen under pressure will fuse into one atom of helium producing heat and light is the essence of our sun. That uranium 238 can be enriched 90% into weapons grade uranium 235 was also determined at the first instant of creation.

All of HaShem's created laws are known as "halachot" – halachot of nature and halachot regarding human behavior and societies from which man cannot escape.

One of these "social" halachas is brought in the Midrash (Bamidbar parashat Beha'alotcha):

וְאֵשָׂו יָאָה וְאֵשָׂו יָאָה

It is a determined halacha that Eisav hates Ya'akov

“Eisav” is a soubriquet or appellation used alternately to describe the peoples of Europe, or gentiles in general, who possess an inner disdain for the nation which HaShem has chosen above all others.

Another “natural law” is brought in the Gemara (Sanhedrin 104b):

וְאֵלֶּה תְּבִרְכָּה כָּלִילָה וְאֵלֶּה בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל :וְאֵלֶּה תְּבִרְכָּה כָּלִילָה וְאֵלֶּה בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

Whoever brings distress (suffering) upon Israel becomes a leader

The formula is quite simple. A lowly corporal in the German army is democratically elected as that nation's Chancellor by promising to rid Europe of its Jews. But he is not alone. The following is a short list of recent “famous” anti-Semites:

T. L. Mencken – “The Jews could be put down very plausibly as the most unpleasant race ever heard of”

George Bernard Shaw – “Stop being Jews and start being human beings”

Henry Adams – “The whole rotten carcass is rotten with Jew worms”

H.G. Wells – “A careful study of anti-Semitism, prejudice and accusations might be of great value to many Jews, who do not adequately realize the irritation they inflict”

Theodore Dreiser – “New York is a ‘kike’s dream of a ghetto”, and “Jews are not ‘pure Americans” and “lack integrity”

Immanuel Kant – “The Jews still cannot claim any true genius,

any truly great man. All their talents and skills revolve around stratagems and low cunning ... They are a nation of swindlers”

Other famous anti-Semites include Pierre Renoir, Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, Richard Wagner, and Joseph Kennedy.

In the demented soul of the intellectual anti-Semite, the halacha stated by Rabbi Yochanan, “Whoever brings distress (suffering) upon Israel becomes a leader”, is as fresh and as dangerous today as it was throughout all of Jewish history.

The aforementioned description of the Big Bang where the smallest of objects produced the entire universe, is being played out today in the political arena. The State of Israel is that infinitesimally small object in the universe of nations. But the pressure it exerts influences every part of the globe.

HaShem planned out and orchestrated the real-politik of the world through the initial geography of the planet, i.e., the major oil route of the world goes through the narrow straits of the Horn of Africa, where one side is Iran and the other Somalia. He placed Eretz Yisrael on the crossroads of three continents – Europe, Asia, and Africa. It is here that opposing cultures, mores, religions and ambitions have either converged or conflicted since the dawn of civilization.

If in the eyes of the United Nations Human Rights Commission (UNHRC), the Security Council, the International Court of Justice in the Hague, and the Quartet, etc., we are the BAD BOY of the world. The UN’s blatant anti-Israel, pro-Arab and pro-Muslim stance has within it the potential to consolidate the international anti-Semitic powers into a potent force against our Jewish State. The UN wishes to forge the “BIG GANG”.

The rabbis explained why HaShem elevates the leaders of the enemies of Am Yisrael to high positions. It is analogous to a

king who wished to punish a disloyal soldier but felt that it was beneath his dignity to deal with a person of such low rank. So, the king appointed the soldier to the position of army chief, and then afterwards had him hanged in the city square. Throughout our history, we see that HaShem took evil-minded criminals and endowed them with great authority in order to degrade, demean, and disgrace them in this world and in the next.

Despite the apparent dangers facing the Jewish State today, the fact is that the Big Bang contains within it a very different scenario, as described by the prophet Yeshayahu (chapter 2):

בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם

בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם 'אֵלֶיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם :

בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם 'אֵלֶיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם :

בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם :

בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם :

This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem:

In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it.

Many peoples will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob.

He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.”

The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples.

They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.

Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

Come, O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD.

This is the new world that will appear at the end of all human folly.

Uman and Coronavirus

Tractate Ta'anit 7a:

Rav Banah says: Whoever adheres by the Torah lishma (for its essence as HaShem's bond with Am Yisrael), the Torah will be for him a life giving potion; but one who does so for ulterior motives, the Torah will be for him a potion of death.

The comparison of the Torah to medication is meticulous, for both depend on dosage, too little is ineffective, too much can kill.

I will take a daring jump into the precarious debate between authentic religious feeling vs. obsessive compulsive religiosity; with obsession defined as a persistent, disturbing preoccupation with an often-unreasonable idea or feeling.

In my experience as a rabbi for over 60 years and through ordinary common sense, I have drawn many conclusions. Following are three of them:

1- The Torah was intended to make us holy and smart. There is a Halacha that when a bet din, after reviewing the evidence and questioning the witnesses, finds everything is text book perfect with an obvious clear decision, but if there is a lingering unpleasant feeling among the judges that someone is perverting the truth (din merumeh. Sanhedrin 32b), the procedures must be repeated until the judges are certain that they have come to a correct and smart decision. Similarly, a scholar who is Torah erudite but is not smart, would do well not to voice an opinion.

2- Good is rarely, if ever, obsessive. Evil often is. A drug addict waits intensely for his next fix, but I doubt if there is anyone who could not sleep in anticipation of eating another piece of matza on the morning of the third day of Pesach, or counting the moments until sunlight when he can don his Tefillin. Good is climbing a steep mountain; evil is the unbreakable free fall from it.

3- Don't even consider Gan Eden when you have created a situation of Gehennom for another Jew, as in the case where one prays in a loud voice disturbing the concentration of his fellow davener.

Now, in normal times, the rush to escape one's family on Rosh Hashana, leaving behind the holy city of Yerushalayim and Eretz Yisrael, including the hundreds of resting places of our nation's most righteous men and women, is nothing short of the yetzer hara turning a desire into an obsession. Rabbi Nachman was certainly a tzaddik, but he was not a Rabbi Akiva, who is resting in Teveria, or like our forefathers in Me'arat HaMachpelah in Chevron. Woe when a religious act turns into an obsession. Run the other way, it is the handiwork of the yetzer hara.

The obsessive compulsion to go at this time to Uman, when a pandemic is killing thousands of people a day worldwide and has sent millions to suffer its symptoms, when these people threaten to stop at nothing to get on the plane to be with the "chevra" at the rebbe's grave who will bring them atonement so they can sin again the coming year, borders on insanity.

The issue of being consistently Jewish smart opens a much wider Pandora's box. There is a group who believes their deceased rabbi never really died and they write letters to him. And Chassidim, including rebbes, who wear clothing like Polish nobility of the 17th century in order not to assimilate into the modern world, while driving the most modern cars.

In closing, there are debilitating mental illnesses that deal with memory loss – dementia and amnesia. The difference is that dementia is permanent, while amnesia is often temporary.

After navigating 2000 years of galut, as predicted in this week's parsha, we have forgotten who we are. We are the grandeur of the Jewish monarchy; kings, prophets, kohen gadol, Bet Hamikdash. But our forgetting is not dementia, it is temporary loss of memory. On the way home from galut, we also picked up bad habits from the nations who hosted us until they murdered us; and it will take several generations to shed the thin veneer of goyishkeit we acquired. Unfortunately, instead of escaping the galut, we brought much of it with us to Eretz

Yisrael, including the various Chassidic sects and old-time rivalries of Chassidim vs Misnagedim vs secular lifestyles.

We should have made a clean break from the galut and brought up a generation like the student-fighters of King David. It hasn't happened yet, and there are many people to blame for it not happening.

Historically, Torah begins from a weakened position, but it eventually fights its way to the top. This will be our fate until the time when we restore our Jewish pride, and authentic, sincere Torah wisdom and intelligence, without obsessive cults and distortions of holy Jewish traditions.

So, for now the three Bs

Be careful Be healthy and Be here

and not BLM but JLMM – Jewish Lives Matter More

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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