

Ki Tavo 5781

BS"D Parashat Ki Tavo 5781

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Becoming Am Yisrael

In this week's parsha we read in Devarim 26:16-19:

וְהָיָה בְּיוֹם הַהוּא כִּי תִשָּׁעַן לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְאָמַרְתָּ בְּכָל דְּבָרֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר צִוְּתְךָ לֵאמֹר ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ ה' אֶחָד
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¹⁶ The Lord your God commands you this day to follow these decrees and laws; carefully observe them with all your heart and with all your soul. ¹⁷ **You have declared this day** that the Lord is your God and that you will walk in obedience to Him, that you will keep His decrees, commands, and laws that you will listen to Him. ¹⁸ **And the Lord has declared this day** that you are His people, His treasured possession as He promised, and that you are to keep all His commands. ¹⁹ He has declared that He will set you in praise, fame, and honor high above all the nations He has made and that you will be a people holy to the Lord your God, as He promised.

After leading the Jewish nation for 41 years, Moshe Rabbeinu

is now in the closing days of his farewell speech. Soon, on the 7th day of the next month of Adar, Moshe will climb Mount Nevo, from where he will ascend to the highest realms of heaven.

Moshe and the Jewish people have experienced unprecedented occurrences: the ten plagues, splitting of the Red Sea, receiving the Torah from the Almighty Himself at Mount Sinai, the Manna, Miriam's Well, the defeat of the mighty Sichon and Og and other innumerable miracles.

Why then did Moshe say to the Jewish people: You have **declared this day** that the Lord is your God... And the Lord **has declared this day** that you are His people...?

Haven't the Jews been God's "people" since the time of Avraham, or at least from the time we received the Torah at Mount Sinai? Why "this day"?

I submit:

Life consists of objective facts, incidences, and intellectual knowledge. However, it often takes an extraordinarily long time for an individual to internalize the changing realities of his life.

An example: A person completes his formal education (usually university). He then realizes that, for the first time in his life, he is no longer subject to the schedules dictated by others. The world is now open before him. He is on his own to sleep late in the morning or to change the world. It occurs again when a person loses his last parent, and he realizes that being "the son of" will now be replaced with being the "head" of his family – with all of its accompanying responsibilities.

For the past 40 years in the desert, the Jewish people were comfortable under the protective wing of Moshe Rabbeinu – their personal and intimate link to the Almighty. Moshe taught

them Torah. He was father, judge, peacemaker, general, and all else. He was the staff upon which every Jew leaned, affording them the confidence necessary to exist in the harsh, barren desert for so long.

They are now shocked into the realization that Moshe's end is drawing near – that the great protective shelter of Moshe will soon be gone and replaced by a relatively smaller and more obscure person. Yehoshua will lead them into Eretz Yisrael, where they will have to wage war against 31 city states for seven years; and then, during the following seven years, each family will leave the community of the twelve tribes and depart to the homestead allotted them by HaShem.

On that day, it awakens in the nation's consciousness that in another 14 years they will be "on their own," free from the schedules and dictates of an acknowledged leader. They will no longer have the comforting feeling that their father figure will solve all their problems.

One can be a citizen of a nation, either by birth or naturalization. It is his choice to either identify with his country or not to feel the national pulse by distancing himself from the challenges facing the nation.

On the day when Moshe said to the Jewish people, "You have **declared this day** that the Lord is your God", he realized that the people had finally understood the purpose and ultimate goal of being taken out of Egypt. It was in order for them to be HaShem's chosen nation. Moshe went on to declare: "And the Lord **has declared this day** that you are His people". The Jewish people had reached a national consensus that, in order to survive, they would have to join together as one nation, with "one for all and all for one".

To be part of Am Yisrael today

Seventy-three years ago, Medinat Yisrael was established. Unfortunately, our brothers and sisters in the galut and many here have not internalized that the Medina is the entity which will usher in the final redemption of our people. They refuse to identify with the revolution that our Father in Heaven has performed for us.

To be part of Am Yisrael today is to live in the land specified by HaShem for His chosen people. It is to speak the language of the Bible and in the way 90% of Israelis do, not Chasidish or Litvish, but pure Ivrit. It is to share in the hardships our people are going through in order to prove to HaShem how much we want to return home. It is to know the military history of the Medina prior to its establishment (The Irgun, and Palmach), including the names of the holy young men who were hanged on the gallows for fighting to rid the land of the **brutish British**. To know what Yechida 101 (Unit 101) means. The Altalena. The Lamed Heh (35 soldiers murdered on their way to aid Gush Etzion in the War of Independence). Golani, Bislach, Ramatkal, tironot and tirturim. To know the civics of the land – its judiciary, legislative and executive branches. In short, it is to feel that this is your home, and we are one family.

Just as HaShem creates human beings with a physical body and a spiritual soul, so has He created Am Yisrael with the physical land of Eretz Yisrael, upon which we are commanded to perform His mitzvot. He created our holy souls to become enriched and nourished by the fulfillment of those mitzvot in Eretz Yisrael. As in the words of the great Ramban, the mitzvot were given to be kept in Eretz Yisrael.

To be involved in keeping the mitzvot outside of the national collective, is like catching a floating cloud which has no substance.

At the outset, this excludes anyone who does not live in the land of Israel. It even excludes those who abide here but do not accept Israeli citizens, because they prefer to be on the periphery of society.

When I first arrived in Eretz Yisrael, I asked a great posek about reciting Hallel on Yom Ha'atzmaut. He answered in the wisest of ways: "It depends on how you feel. If you see the hand of HaShem behind all the episodes of the Medina, then you must say Hallel; but if you don't feel it then do not". I see the hand of HaShem every day and in every way.

The vast majority of our people here love the Medina. They are willing to make any and all sacrifices for the Medina's welfare, security and development. Even those who do not observe all the mitzvot will tell you, privately, that what is transpiring here is the hand of God.

The phenomenon of a people keeping alive a 2000-year dream of returning to their ancient homeland is unprecedented and beyond human terms. That the Jewish people are so faithful to the Torah, and the desire even by people who are not observant to be Jewish, is a mystery.

It is so wondrous that even the Almighty is taken aback at the degree of faithfulness of His people, as stated by the prophet Zecharya (8:3-8):

[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]

:הַיְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִשְׁמְרֵנוּ וְיִשְׁמְרֵנוּ מִכָּל חַסְדֵּי הַיְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ 'וּלְכֹל חַסְדֵּי הַיְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

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³ This is what the Lord says: "I will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the Faithful City, and the mountain of the Lord Almighty will be called the Holy Mountain." ⁴ This is what the Lord Almighty says: "Once again men and women of ripe old age will sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each of them with cane in hand because of their age. ⁵ The city streets will be filled with boys and girls playing there." ⁶ This is what the Lord Almighty says: **"It may seem marvelous to the remnant of this people at that time, but will it seem marvelous to me?" declares the Lord Almighty.** ⁷ This is what the Lord Almighty says: "I will save my people from the countries of the east and the west. ⁸ I will bring them back to live in Jerusalem; they will be my people, and I will be faithful and righteous to them as their God."

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הַיְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

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