

Ki Tisa 5776

BS"D Parashat Ki Tisa 5776

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Open your eyes & run to do a mitzvah

In many cases, the timing of a mitzva is as meaningful if not more so than the act itself.

1- The tragic events of the Golden Calf and its implications to this very day, erupted from a mistake in timing. Moshe informed the nation that he would descend from Mount Sinai 40 days after his ascent. However, according to the calculations of the erev rav (mixed multitude) 40 days had passed and Moshe had not returned. They concluded that Moshe had died on the mountain, giving rise to their evil influence on the Jews and the transgression of the Golden Calf.

2- Avraham was commanded to offer up his son Yitzchak as a burnt offering on Mount Moriah, a command which was the ultimate test of loyalty to HaShem. The Torah states:

וַיִּשְׁרָא אַבְרָהָם בַּבֹּקֶר וַיֵּלֶךְ לְעֵשָׂוִית

Avraham arose in the early morning to begin his trek to Yerushalayim to fulfill HaShem's will

Avraham's conduct serves as the basis for the Halachic principle:

וְיָרַח אֶת עֵינָיו וַיֵּלֶךְ לְעֵשָׂוִית

One should be diligent and quick in carrying out Halachic obligations.

3- The Gemara (Succa 17a) ascribes the suffering of Yaakov regarding his daughter Dina and the disappearance of Yosef to the fact that when Yaakov returned from the house of Lavan after twenty years of being away, he tarried for two more years in Schem before returning to his father:

וַיָּשָׁב יַעֲקֹב מֵאֶרֶץ אֲרָם וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּשֵׁחֵם שְׁנָיִם שָׁנִים

4- The Gemara (Yevamot 48b) states that many gairim (converts) suffer difficult lives, as a punishment for their indecisiveness and delay in converting.

There is a deeper aspect to postponing or even procrastinating the performance of a mitzva.

5- The Midrash (Tanchuma, Beraishiet) relates that HaShem commanded the prophet Yechezkel to go out to a "bik'ah" (valley), where HaShem would speak to him (Yechezkel 3,22-23). When the prophet entered the valley, he realized that HaShem was already there waiting for him, as the verse states:

וַיֵּצֵא אֱלֹהִים אֶת יַעֲקֹב מֵאֶרֶץ אֲרָם וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּשֵׁחֵם שְׁנָיִם שָׁנִים
וַיֵּשֶׁב יַעֲקֹב בְּשֵׁחֵם שְׁנָיִם שָׁנִים

וַיֵּצֵא אֱלֹהִים אֶת יַעֲקֹב מֵאֶרֶץ אֲרָם וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּשֵׁחֵם שְׁנָיִם שָׁנִים
וַיֵּשֶׁב יַעֲקֹב בְּשֵׁחֵם שְׁנָיִם שָׁנִים

And the hand of the LORD came there upon me; and He said unto me: 'Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there speak with thee.'

Then I arose, and went forth into the plain; and, behold, the glory of the LORD stood there, as the glory which I saw by

the river Chebar; and I fell on my face.

From here we learn that when there is a mitzva or Divine command to be performed, Hashem precedes the individual in anticipation of the fulfillment of His dictate. And when carrying out the dictate is delayed, and certainly when it is not performed at all, it can have drastic results.

Imagine a first shiduch date when the young lady or man arrives an hour late. That relationship will never be what it could have been had his/her conduct resonated anticipation of the date by arriving in time.

What can we say of Jews of standing who convince their disciples to delay the fulfillment of a mitzva? And when they not only convince the disciples to delay the mitzva, but urge them to ignore the mitzva act entirely, what can we say?

And when the disciples number into the thousands and even tens of thousands, then we have before us a tragedy of religious, historic and national proportions.

Tikun Olam

In 1936, Moshe Goldstein, a loyal and devout Chassid of the Rabbe of Munkatz, Hungary published a book called **Tikun Olam**, where he called for the Jews to refrain from going to Eretz Yisrael. The book opens with the names and letters of an additional 150 leading Chassidic rabbis who endorsed the book's imperative that Jews were prohibited from returning to Eretz Yisrael until the arrival of the Mashiach.

His (and their) thesis was that the Land is so holy that one is not permitted to relate to it in a secular "this worldly"

manner. It is prohibited to farm it or to do anything of normative life there except to learn Torah. He and those who endorsed his position, opposed the creation of new settlements, even religious ones.

Hitler had become Chancellor of Germany in 1933, and his intentions for the Jewish nation were not a secret. Yet, his point of view was supported by the biggest names in the Chassidic world, but I am embarrassed and even ashamed to mention them.

In this week's parsha, Moshe Rabbeinu replies to HaShem's offer that He would destroy the iniquitous Jewish people and Judaism would continue through Moshe and his children. Moshe says that if HaShem destroys the Jewish nation, his own name should be erased from the Torah.

Among the Chassidic leaders who opposed coming to Eretz Yisrael were those who escaped the Holocaust by fleeing to Eretz Yisrael. Then there was the illustrious Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman zt"l (he did not endorse the book) who was in the USA at the time and chose to return to his community and yeshiva in Europe to be with them at the time of their martyrdom.

If the above is appalling and shocking – how such wise men could be so wrong in their misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the Torah, Jewish history and events of the time – what follows is even more damning.

Did we learn from history?

Apparently, the destruction of 7 million Jews in Europe and the establishment and development of Eretz Yisrael, are not enough to prove that the Munkatscher rabbi and his colleagues were dead wrong. Today, we hear in many Chassidic and yeshiva

circles in the USA the very same voices that are repeating the same blind ideologies of yesterday.

They say “No” to Aliya and “No” to realizing that it is not the Jewish way to wait for the Mashiach to bring them on a magic carpet to the Holy Land, while in the interim they can escape the challenges of returning home to create the conditions for the Mashiach’s arrival.

The miraglim (rebellious scouts) and those who danced around the Golden Calf in search of an alternative to historic Torah Judaism are still very much alive among us.

What will it take to open the eyes of the religious leaders in the galut to see that we are in the midst of the final redemption of the Jewish people in our return home? The Shoah was not enough to move these people to leave the “Gan Eden” of the galut. What will come after the Shoah?

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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