

Korach 5780

BS"D Parashat Korach 5780

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Opportunity Lost

An allegory:

When an owner wants to punish his herd, he blinds the leading sheep, who then misdirects them the herd over the cliff to oblivion.

Think about it.



The Gemara (Bava Batra 74a) relates some of the travels and adventures of the great amora Rabbah Bar Bar Chama. Among them is the incident when the Rav met a Bedouin in the Sinai desert (some say it was Eliyahu HaNavi) who took him to where Korach and his followers were swallowed up in the ground. The Rav heard voices coming from the desert floor calling out, "Moshe and his Torah are true, and we are false".

The Bedouin then revealed that every Rosh Chodesh the entrance to Gehennom appears at that precise place and Korach repeats his confession.

What can we learn from this repeated confession of Korach, the would be kohen gadol?

In two words, "opportunity lost". Had Korach not been overcome by ego and ambition he would have maintained his elite position as one of the four Levites who carried the Holy Ark when moving from camp to camp. But he made the wrong choice and paid heavily for his intransigent stubbornness, even when facing an unattainable goal, actually sheer madness!

This coming Thursday, the 26th of Sivan my wife and I will celebrate 58 years since our aliya. Every year we visit the airport at 5:30 PM; the time when our plane landed, and we sit and reminisce over a cup of coffee and count the myriad blessings HaShem has given to two young kids who left their families and the land of their birth to embark on a future unknown, a future that turned out to be over and beyond anything we could have imagined.

We left behind family and friends. However, after time we merited to bring our parents and my brother and his family. For my father it was a return home since he was born in Tzfat in 1904, and for us every day was a new level of Torah and involvement in the ongoing progression of Jewish history. And we take extraordinary nachat when witnessing our children,

grandchildren and great grandchildren, all born in Medinat Yisrael, stepping forward to take their places in the amazing unbreakable chain of proud Jews and Israelis in preparing the next stage for HaShem to perform His miracles for Am Yisrael.

We left behind friends who regret not taking the step towards the opportunities of their lives; indeed, opportunity lost.

Pikuach Nefesh

Yesterday a good friend called for advice. He will be visiting the States shortly and wants to know what to say to his Chareidi family and friends that would convince them to make aliya?

I advised him to deliver the message that today it is no longer an ideological debate of Zionism vs. waiting for the Mashiach to do the job; a nice soft life in the kollel as opposed to the challenges facing the citizens of this medina. Today it has come down to one single issue – pikuach nefesh (saving one's life), before which all other issues pale.

The actions necessary to save a Jewish life override the prohibitions of Shabbat and one must eat on Yom Kippur when it is necessary to keep one alive. The Halachic principle states: "desecrate one Shabbat so that you will be able to sanctify many others".

No one can say when the proverbial roof will fall in on the galut, but the walls are shaking, the floor is rattling, and the roof is leaking.

And when the roof does fall there will be no returning. The window of opportunity will close so tight that even a tefilla will not be able to soar to the Shamayim. The earth will open up and devour the escape routes, and claustrophobia will fill the minds of all those who would want to come home but will

then be unable to.

I liken the present view of the yeshivishe world of America who are waiting for the Mashiach to whisk them eastward to a life of perfection in this world of paradise, to a man standing on a street corner waiting for a bus. But you point out that the nearest bus stop is 10 kilometers away, and the gentleman relies on the belief that one day the mayor will put one here, and it could happen even today, this minute; but if he tarries, he will still wait.

Hashem holds a stopwatch. He rules the world on mathematical principles of time and space.

When King David requested a bit more time to live, HaShem replied that he would leave this world at the precise moment that his son Shlomo would have to ascend the throne.

The Jews left Egypt be'chipazon (hurriedly) because the precise moment of their freedom had arrived.

Dear reader, I apologize that I now have to pause writing because my granddaughter Adi has just come to ask my help in the four questions of homework.

I am back:

The teacher's fourth question was, are we now living in the time of atchalta de'geula – the beginning of our redemption?

Adi's visit was great timing.

I explained to her that we are not now living in the time of the beginning of our redemption, because the beginning was 72 years ago when the first law passed by the new Medina was the Law of Return, when the gates of the holy land were thrown open for all Jews. Today we are in an advanced stage of redemption, with the majority of Halachic Jews now in the

Medina, and the wilderness has been turned into a garden, as in the words of the prophet Yechezkel (36,8):

:הָאָרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהָרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יִפְרֹוּ עֵצִים וְפֵרוֹת וְיָבִיאוּ אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיָשְׁבוּ בָּהֶן וְהָאָרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהָרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יִפְרֹוּ עֵצִים וְפֵרוֹת וְיָבִיאוּ אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיָשְׁבוּ בָּהֶן

But you, mountains of Israel, will produce branches and fruit for my people Israel, for they will soon come home.

On this verse Rabbi Abba says in Sanhedrin 98a:

There is no more significant indication of geula than this (when the land brings forth its blessed produce).

The prophet continues:

But you, mountains of Israel, will produce branches and fruit for my people Israel, for they will soon come home. I am concerned for you (the land of Israel) and will look on you with favor; you will be plowed and sown, – and I will cause many people to live on you, yes, all of Israel. The towns will be inhabited, and the ruins rebuilt. I will increase the number of people and animals living on you, and they will be fruitful and become numerous. I will settle people on you as in the past and will make you prosper more than before. Then you will know that I am the Lord. I will cause people, my people Israel, to live on you. They will possess you, and you will be their inheritance; you will never again deprive them of their children (no more galut).

There is a two-pronged process transpiring at this time, a push and a pull. The pull is the Shechina drawing ever closer to Am Yisrael in Eretz Yisrael and the push is the ever more grievous situation of the Jews in galut. So far it's been a gentle push, but it will descend into a violent one and then

the issue of pikuach nefesh – to be or not to be – will face every Jew in galut.

So those who have the sensitivity of a Jewish neshama, and those who value their lives, should know that mother Eretz Yisrael is waiting for each of you to come home.

Remember the three Bs

B careful **B** healthy **B** HERE

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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