

Masai 5771

BS"D Parashat Masai 5771

Consider the words: Dafka, Alush, Ritma, Barsa, Mitka, Avrona – what do they mean to you?

Taken out of context, they have no meaning, they are obscure and irrelevant; however, within the context of our parsha they gain great relevance. For they are some of the stations where our ancestors encamped in the desert on their way to the Promised Land.

These places, when viewed by themselves, are irrelevant; their importance and eternal memory comes into play only through their connection with Am Yisrael.

Karet is a punishment for certain capital sins. The commentators differ as to the details of this very harsh penalty, but all agree that in its most severe form, it involves the severing of the sinner's soul from the main stream of Jewish neshamot (souls) in the next world. The soul is banished to oblivion, obscurity, absolute irrelevance, forever to be a **part of nothing** which is even less than nothing – total dissociation from the Almighty.

The lesson to be learned from the above is that relevancy becomes reality only to that degree that one is associated with the eternal God of Israel and His intimate connection with Am Yisrael through the Torah.

I would be hard pressed to think of a more frightening thought for a living, thinking Jew than oblivion and irrelevance where, as stated above, to be a part of "nothing" the soul becomes even less than nothing. That is *karet*.

We find precedents of people being "outside" and hence irrelevant in our history.

The cloud that covered the Jewish nation in their desert wanderings, expelled from it people (like many of the tribe of Dan) who did not deserve to be in the presence of the Shechina, and as such became irrelevant to Jewish history. One who is punished with metzora must leave the walled city, and is, in effect, socially ostracized. Like Gehazi, the rejected protégée of the prophet Elisha and Gachazi's sons.

One of the descriptions of Eretz Yisrael in the Torah is (Devarim 11:12)



A land that the Lord your God regards, The "eyes" of God never cease to observe it from the beginning of the year until it's end

Meaning: One who lives in the Holy Land is in a diametrical opposite state to karet, for we and the Land are constantly in the Creator's consciousness. The implication – or even more than a mere implication – is that HaShem's interest in chutz la'aretz and in the people there could be compared to being outside the protective canopy-cloud of HaShem.

As history is being played out today, Medinat Yisrael has become in the eyes of the world the sole representative and "spokesman" of the Jewish nation, despite protests of some JINOs (Jews in name only). Israel's international status has relegated the once crucial Jewish communities and their vocal leaders in the galut to the status of near "irrelevance". It would not be wrong to say that the only relevance of the American Jewish community (or rather the Jewish American community) to the Jewish nation at large, is the 70% who were instrumental in electing the worst anti-Israel American president in history, and they will vote for him again in 2012.

The terms: 

the land of life – the lands of life

referring to Eretz Yisrael appear in the TaNaCh over 430 times.

They are found in many rabbinical writings when referring to the future resurrection of the dead, which will occur only in Eretz Yisrael, and the Jews in the galut will somehow have to make their way here in order to merit their chance for new life.

The conclusion of all the above is that life and relevance of a Jew are measured according to his interaction with Am Yisrael in Eretz Yisrael.

I am writing this as an introduction to my reply to several mailings I received in reaction to last week's message.

In a sentence, I said that despite the incredulous shock that reverberated around the Jewish world, that a Jew had perpetrated the terrible crime of murder in Boro Park, there was also a sense of relief. Because had the murderer been a black, or an Hispanic or a Moslem, life would never be the same in the holy precinct of Boro Park, whereas now life can return to "normal" with the blame placed upon one deranged individual Jew.

Some comments were positive, with one gentleman writing: "You hit the nail on the head", others were less sympathetic.

Following are some excerpts from one of the less agreeable messages, to be followed with my reply to the writer.

Dear Rabbi Kahana,

I understand your belief that the Jews of Galus are holding back the fulfillment of Hashem's promises to the Jewish people and that you blame us for that. I get it.

You believe that if only we could “see the light” it would be clear and obvious and we would all make Aliyah immediately. Again, I get it. I even see that you feel the last resort is to guilt us all into coming. Your message is loud and clear...

You chose to distort the story to suit your own needs, rather than focus on the spontaneous Ahdus of Am Yisrael which showed what we can do when unified for a cause. Your brother, HY”D, understood this and rallied to unite the Jews against a common enemy...

I am not someone who has any right to lecture you in my own mind, and certainly even less so in yours, since I am a frum professional living in... who is “content” to send money to Eretz Yisrael, visit on occasion, and yet return each time to my Galus. But I am just so upset with what you wrote that I felt I must speak out, even if out of line.

After reading your article in shul prior to Krias HaTorah, my world was shaken, and not in a good way. I often pass around your weekly message to others and share your comments at my Shabbos table with friends and family. This week I didn’t. I spoke with another individual who introduced me to your writings, and he indicated that he could not show this week’s vitriol to his wife, as he usually does, out of fear of upsetting her. You ruined my Shabbos...

Perhaps if you focused more on the beauty of Eretz Yisrael, the exalted life of being a Jew in Eretz Yisrael... your Ahavas Chinam will bring the ultimate geulah of Moshiach Tzidkeinu, b’mehairo b’yomainu, so that we may celebrate a Yom Tov on that day, and our Father can bless us “kulanu k’echad”.

My reply:

Dear Mr.

You might be surprised to learn that I appreciate your

comments and the criticism – for one does not grow as much from praise as from criticism.

Permit me to clarify some apparent misunderstandings.

1- I am quite confident that the Jews in the galus are not holding back the geula – they don't have that kind of influence in the shamayim.

2- I have a wide circle of friends here and abroad, because I have a great natural love for my fellow Jew. It is far from my intention to create sin'at chinam, or to injure any Jew in the world in any way. Remember I was born and raised in the USA, and feel very close to the people with whom I am so familiar.

3- Behind all my writings, including my negative opinions of the religious leadership in the galut, is one singular purpose – to save the **lives** of Jews in the galut.

I believe that you are all in great danger. Spiritual danger certainly, because intermarriage will cross the doorstep of almost every Jewish home – as it has already occurred in the homes of some well-known rabbis – but you are also in great physical danger. The Jews in the galut are dying off by intermarriage, and they are also very close to a calamity on the scale we witnessed in Europe.

The Jews of the United States, regardless of their particular worshipping or non-worshipping preferences, will chas ve'chaliela be the scapegoats of all the ills of that land.

I don't deal with the question of Medinat Yisrael's role in the final redemption of our people, even though I personally feel that the Medina is the initial stage in the preparation for the Mashiach. My responsibility is to arouse the Jews in the galut to come home in order to save themselves from a terrible fate, even if some people feel insulted along the way.

The fact is that there are a sizable number of families who have come home because of what I wrote. If I knew that my writings were having no positive effect I would stop immediately – I have enough to do with my life as a rav of a bet kneset and my other projects.

4- If you felt disturbed on Shabbat, it was not of my doing. Because, in most cases where one is driven to anger, it is himself with whom he is angry. Permit me to say that your Shabbat was “spoiled” because as a frum Jew you know deep down that your place is in the holy land of Eretz Yisrael.

Respectfully,

Nachman Kahana

As I stated earlier, life and relevance of a Jew are measured according to his interaction with Am Yisrael in Eretz Yisrael. I hope that you will decide to be relevant to Jewish history, choose **life** and come home to Eretz Yisrael while there is still the opportunity to do so.

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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