

Mishpatim 5776

BS"D Parashat Mishpatim 5776

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Open Your Eyes – the Angels are working overtime!

In last week's parsha, Rashi states that when Aharon met Moshe after tens of years of separation, Moshe introduced his wife Tzipora and his two sons. Aharon's reaction was one of grief and hurt.

The Jewish people now in Egypt are being crushed under the yoke of slavery; why bring three more Jews into this cruel situation!?

From his reaction, it would appear that Aharon was denying or at least doubting the forthcoming exodus, because if indeed the Jews were to be leaving even within a year's time (which occurred), why did Aharon object to three more Jews taking part in the great experience?

The answer lies in our parsha.

The initial set of Halachot which was revealed to the nation after the incredible, unprecedented events at Mount Sinai, relates to 'eved Ivri' – a Jew or Jewess who is obligated to work for another Jew for various reasons, usually for a period of 6 years.

At the end of six years of work or at the advent of the Yovel (Jubilee year), whichever comes first, the Jewish bondsman has the option to go free or to remain a bondsman until the following Jubilee year.

wife, and the offspring she gave birth to with the bondsman were never his children.

There are two broadly accepted premises within wide circles in the galut: that the State of Israel is in great danger, while life in the United States or other places in the galut is secure.

This is a bubble of delusionary virtual reality that relegates its adherents to being slaves to their personal instincts. We, in Eretz Yisrael are threatened, but are not in mortal danger. The Jews in the galut are in mortal danger.

We are the only nation in the world explicitly threatened with nuclear weapons, and there is little solace in the non-nuclear threats.

But in reality, we are in the safest place on the planet.

The Torah (Melachim 2 chap. 6) relates a story involving Elisha, the protégé of Eliyahu Ha'Navi.

The King of Aram learned that Elisha was in the town of Dotan in northern Shomron; he sent a large military contingent to surround the town with orders to capture Elisha.

The force arrived there at night and waited. In the early morning, Gaichazi, the student of Elisha, went outside and saw that the enemy had completely besieged the town. In desperation, he called out to Elisha, who calmed the young man by saying:

:אִתָּנוּ אֵין מִסְפָּר וְעִמָּם כִּי מִסְפָּר

Do not fear, for there are more on our side than there are on theirs

אִתָּנוּ אֵין מִסְפָּר וְעִמָּם כִּי מִסְפָּר (אִתָּנוּ אֵין מִסְפָּר וְעִמָּם כִּי מִסְפָּר)
אִתָּנוּ אֵין מִסְפָּר וְעִמָּם כִּי מִסְפָּר

Elisha prayed to Hashem saying, "Lord, open his eyes (of Gaichazi) so he can see (the surrounding spiritual world)" And Hashem opened his eyes, and he saw the mountain filled with horses and chariots of fire around Elisha

Surrounding Eretz Yisrael are myriads of God's angels protecting the righteous of the land.

At this point, you, dear reader, might be shrugging your shoulders in skepticism and thinking that what Hashem performed for a great tzaddik like Elisha is not necessarily what Hashem does for our lowly generation. Wrong!

Whoever thinks that the establishment of the State of Israel, the victories in our impossible wars, and the quality of life we enjoy today are not the result of God's personal intervention, is simply not thinking.

The angels are being overworked in their defense of the Holy Land. After every war, we hear tales of soldiers who swore that angels were driving them on to victory.

By every human standard, the State of Israel should have died in "childbirth" and should certainly not have attained the mature age of 67 (and most certainly not have the most stable currency in the world). We are now in the midst of Hashem's fulfillment of His promise that He will return His children to Eretz Yisrael.

And what of the reality in the galut, where our fellow Jews view their situation with serenity?

The Jews who cling to the galut are similar to the eved Ivri who declares:

'... I love my master and my wife and children and do not want to go free'.

Their masters are the governments of the lands they live in.

Their wives are their domestic comforts; their homes, cars, boats, bungalows, TVs and finished basement replete with full size billiards table. Their children are the contributions they make to their gentile societies. Their implied declaration is that they do not want to go free, it is their admission that they pick and choose the mitzvot which serve them, and will serve Hashem only on their terms.

A bit of history:

Upon the establishment of the State of Israel, the gates of the land were thrown open, with the first law to be passed being the Law of Return.

Hashem granted the dispersed of Am Yisrael a period of time to return home, in accordance with Israel's capacity to absorb the returnees. In its first years, Israel absorbed over one million desperate Jews from Europe and Arab and Moslem lands – a feat unparalleled in all history. And all this in the midst of wars.

In these short years, the Land has embraced its returning children so that today the majority of Jews in the world have arrived home. This, in itself, proves that our generation is the greatest one since the generation that entered the land with Yehoshua bin Nun.

As modern history evolves, we see an increase in the “discomfort level” of Jews in foreign lands.

Today, it is uncomfortable to be a Jew in Europe, and in many other places in the world. We are all aware that latent anti-Semitism is as close as the Gentile at the next work desk in your office, or behind the gentle-Gentile smile on your neighborhood green grocer's face...

The reality of life has taught us that the fabric of society is thin, that it takes little to turn neighbor against

neighbor and friend into foe.

But this thought does not really disturb our brothers and sisters in the galut; because deep in the recesses of the Jewish galut mind is the knowledge that if, God forbid, the situation becomes intolerable, Israel will always be there to take them in. The house in places like the Five Towns and Lakewood will always be there to be sold to finance their return to Israel, if need be. This, too, is virtual reality.

Rambam writes in the Laws of Teshuva that Hashem waits a period of time for the sinner to return; but if he does not, Hashem creates a situation in his life that makes doing teshuva a very difficult – if not impossible – alternative.

Hashem has given the Jews in the galut a limited window of opportunity to return to Eretz Yisrael. However, with the passing of time, it will become increasingly difficult to do so, until that tragic moment when Hashem will say AD KAN (no more!) and the gates will be closed.

We pray in the chapter preceding the morning “Shema”

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Lead me upright to our land

Meaning: Permit me to return home, not as a poor refugee with only the shirt on my back (as was the case after World War Two), but upright in body and spirit, with self-pride and confidence.

There is still time for those who wish to assure their family’s spiritual and physical future – but who knows for how long!

Shabbat Shalom,

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