

Mishpatim 5780

BS"D Parashat Mishpatim 5780

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Declining \$20,000 of Jewish Money

The Jewish Federation of Rockland County and the Anti-Defamation League awarded a gift of twenty thousand dollars to Mr. Joseph Gluck for his heroic act of preventing a savage attack in a bet kneset in Monsey, NY, and aided in apprehending the attacker.

However, Mr. Gluck, after consulting with his rabbi, rejected the gift because the two donor organizations are pro Zionist, so they do not represent the beliefs and values of his Haredi community. Mr. Gluck told News 12 Brooklyn, "I was not willing to offer my soul for \$20,000. My identity for \$20,000 was not for sale."

Mr. Gluck's rabbi instead raised that amount from people who were inspired by his actions. Rabbi Dovid Feldman explained to News 12, "the ADL and Jewish Federation were about to issue a statement to encourage and promote the Zionist idea of Jewish self-defense, of fighting back, of fighting our enemies, which happens to be contrary to our tradition," as reported by the Jerusalem Post.

The Slave Who Refuses to be Freed

The Creator chose to begin the halachic code of the Written Torah (parashat Mishpatim) with matters pertaining to the master-slave relationship. This was done, I believe, in order to impress upon the newly freed slaves the compassionate nature of the Torah, as opposed to Egyptian cruelty in that particular area, which was the most familiar to the Jews after undergoing two centuries of slavery.

Among other details, the parasha sets down the rules regarding a thief who was sold by the court for nonpayment of the principle of his theft (if he can repay the principle but not the additional fine imposed upon him as punishment for his crime, he is not sold into slavery).

During the time of his servitude, the Torah grants the master the right to couple the Jewish slave with a non-Jewish slave woman for purposes of procreation, as is stated (Shemot 21:4):

וְאִם יִשְׂרָאֵלִי יִהְיֶה וְנָשָׂא אִשָּׁתוֹ אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִשְׂרָאֵלִית וְהָיוּ לָהּ בָנִים וְבָנוֹת וְהָיוּ עִבְדֵי אֲדֹנָיו כְּעִבְדֵי אֲדֹנָיו יְהוָה שְׁשָׁנִים וְשִׁשָּׁנִים וְהָיוּ עִבְדֵי אֲדֹנָיו כְּעִבְדֵי אֲדֹנָיו יְהוָה

If his master gives him a non-Jewish slave woman and she should give birth to children, she and her children remain slaves when the time for his release arrives

After his six-year period of bondage, he is free to leave. However, if he should choose to remain (with his master's consent), he is taken to the court where he declares his desire to remain a slave and his right ear is pierced. He then continues to serve until the Yovel (Jubilee Year.) This person is defined in halacha as an eved nirtza, a "pierced slave".

What does Mr. Gluck, his rabbi and his community have in common with the ever nirtza, the pierced ear slave? Answer:

Do Not Fear

There are two broadly accepted premises within wide circles in the galut: 1) that the State of Israel is in imminent mortal danger, and 2) that life in the United States or other places in the galut is secure.

This, too, is a bubble of virtual reality that relegates its adherents to being slaves to their personal instincts. For we in Eretz Yisrael are threatened, but are not in danger; whereas, the Jews in the galut are not yet threatened, but are assuredly in mortal danger.

Granted that, on the face of it, we who have returned to Eretz Yisrael and have had to struggle in defense of our Holy Land are threatened. We are the only nation in the world explicitly threatened with nuclear weapons. But in reality, we are the safest place on the planet.

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

The King of Aram learned that Elisha was in the town of Dotan in northern Shomron and sent a large military force 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 surrounded the town. In desperation, he called out to Elisha, who calmed the young man by saying:

:אֲנִי אֶחָד וְאַתָּה רַבְּבָאִים

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

theirs

אֲנִי וְכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיַד הַשָּׁמַיִם וְכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיַד הַשָּׁמַיִם
אֲנִי וְכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיַד הַשָּׁמַיִם וְכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיַד הַשָּׁמַיִם

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 is doing 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 71 years (and most certainly not have the most stable currency in the world, with the dollar dropping daily in favor of the shekel). But we are here in the fulfillment of HaShem's promise that He will return His children to Eretz Yisrael and – establish a Torah society not seen in the last 2000 years.

This is the "true" reality, as we live now to celebrate the defeat of our enemies and will soon celebrate the modern-day

Purim festivals to be established by the Chief Rabbinate.

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

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 European and Arab and Moslem lands; a feat unparalleled in all history. And all this in the midst of wars.

In these 71 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 very 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.

Many Jews claim that the threat of anti-Semitism is irrational, and certainly not in the land where a woman and a black person are presidential contenders.

But the reality of life has taught us that the fabric of society is so thin that it takes very 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 houses in places like the Five Towns and Lakewood will always be there to sell and finance their return to Israel, if need be.

This, too, is virtual reality.

The Rambam writes in the Laws of Teshuva that HaShem waits for a period of time for the sinner to return; but if he does not return, 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 period of time to return to Eretz Yisrael. However, with the passage 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,

Nachman Kahana

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