

# Naso 5775

BS"D Parashat Naso 5775

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

## The Courage to Overcome

On the first of Nisan, in the second year of our exodus from Egypt, the Mishkan (Tabernacle) began functioning. Each of the first 12 days were highlighted by honoring the Nasi (president, head) of one of the 12 tribes to bring his personal sacrifices to the Mishkan.

The first Nasi was Nachshon ben Aminadav, from the tribe of Yehuda.

Commentaries explain that Nachshon was chosen to be first by virtue of his singular act of courage when he alone, of all the nation of Israel, followed Moshe's dictate and jumped into the churning, turbulent Yam Suf (Red Sea) before the waters divided.

Millions of newly freed slaves, placed in untenable circumstance by the God who freed them, stood paralyzed. Behind was the angry and vicious Paro at the head of his army. In front was the impassible sea. No one moved even when Moshe commanded them to jump into the waters.

It was Nachshon alone who felt the compelling spirit of HaShem assuring that he would succeed even when he must perform an irrational act. Nachshon jumped into the waters and they immediately divided into 12 lanes, one for each tribe.

There were other instances in our history of one individual who was endowed with ruach hakodesh – the spirit of HaShem,

which enabled him to perform feats of unimaginable courage. Courage that overcame timidity. Initiative that overcame indolence. Responsibility that overcame desertion.

Gideon the Judge, defeated the entire Midianite army with only 300 soldiers (Judges chapter 7).

Yehonatan, son of King Shaul, accompanied only by his shield bearer, defeated the entire Philistine army (Shmuel 1 chapter 14).

David, the young shepherd, vanquished Goliath the Philistine human war machine, with one well-placed stone from his slingshot.

What drove these individuals to perform acts of altruism for the nation which could have easily cost them their lives? It was the belief that HaShem would stand with His nation Yisrael, despite what was perceived at the time to be the end of the Jewish people. Ruach hakodesh which filled the sinews of their bodies and uplifted their spirits with the courage to lead the nation against impossible odds.

It was this overpowering feeling of emunah (belief) which translated into courage that was behind the great and enduring friendship between David and Yehonatan (son of King Shaul) that led Yehonatan to relinquish the monarchy in favor of David. David and Yehonatan were men of great Torah erudition, and of great personal courage in defense of the Jewish people in Eretz Yisrael.

## **The Courage to be Isolated**

The first Rashi in the Torah quotes Rabbi Yitzchak's query in

the Midrash. The Torah is essentially a book of mitzvot, and as such it should begin with the first mitzva that Hashem commanded us – the calculation and declaration of the new months and years; not the story of creation, which does not even contain sufficient information for us to know that happened at the beginning of time.

Rav Yitzchak explains, that Hashem began the Torah with the story of creation in order to refute future claims of the nations that we invaded the Land of Canaan, destroyed its gentile inhabitants and illegally settled the Land. To their accusations, R. Yitzchak says, we have the counterclaim that HaShem is the Creator and Master of all that exists, and He gave Eretz Yisrael exclusively to the Jewish nation.

Rabbi Yitzchak's suggestion that our reply to the anti-Semites should be based on the Creation appears at first glance to be not only naive, but unrealistic, unhelpful, and not constructive. Who will we convince? The over one billion Christians and over one billion Moslems who would like to see the world devoid of Jews?

I believe that R. Yitzchak was not suggesting that we answer the goyim with the claim that HaShem created the world. But rather, he was predicting that the time will come when all our diplomatic niceties and explanations will fail to overcome the hate in the hearts and minds of Aisav and Yishmael. In addition there will be many Jews – ranging from the non-observant to the ultra-observant who will side with Aisav and Yishmael, the enemies. At that time, the sound part of the Jewish nation in Eretz Yisrael will have no other defense but to fall back on the Creator's promise that the Land – all of it – is ours and only ours.

This claim will cause us to be isolated from the family of "enlightened" nations.

But in contrast to the ruach hakodesh which enveloped

individuals such as Nachshon ben Aminadav, Gideon, David and Yehonatan, in the future ruach hakodesh will descend on the whole of the Jewish people living in Eretz Yisrael at that time. The Jews in the galut will not be part of the great miracles which will be initiated by the courage of our people, because their decision to live in the galut is a function of their lack of courage.

World events are spinning at a dizzying pace, with Israel at the center of the world centrifuge, surrounded by many nations, and some "Jewish in name only" – competing to see who can scathe the Jewish State more.

The next stage in our history will demand great courage from the people in Eretz Yisrael; courage that is acquired through true faith in the God of Israel. The Creator who promised this land to His chosen people for the purpose of establishing here a perfect society under God's Torah, as prophesied by King David (Tehilim 27):

:יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲנִי וְיְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲנִי וְיְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲנִי וְיְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲנִי וְיְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲנִי

:יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲנִי וְיְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲנִי וְיְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲנִי וְיְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲנִי וְיְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲנִי

:יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲנִי וְיְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲנִי וְיְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲנִי וְיְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲנִי וְיְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲנִי

***The LORD is my light and my salvation whom shall I fear?***

***The LORD is the stronghold of my life of whom shall I be afraid?***

***When the wicked advance against me to devour my flesh it is my enemies and my foes who will stumble and fall***

***Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then I will be confident***

The enemies of Israel are many and diverse. They come from Europe, the Americas, Asia, Africa, and all the rest. Many are white as Norwegians and others as black as Sudanese, with every tint in between them. They are Christians, Moslems, and Atheists. But despite their differences, they all share a common hatred of the Jews, even though many have never seen or spoken to a Jew in their lives.

King David had it right again when he wrote in Tehilim 83:

**A psalm of Asaph.**

**O God, do not remain silent; do not turn a deaf ear, do not stand aloof, O God.**

**See how your enemies growl, how your foes rear their heads.**

**With cunning they conspire against your people; they plot against those you cherish.**

**“Come,” they say, “let us destroy them as a nation, so that Israel’s name is remembered no more.”**

**With one mind they plot together; they form an alliance against you, the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites, of Moab and the Hagrites, Byblos, Ammon and Amalek, Philistia, with the people of Tyre.**

**Even Assyria has joined them to reinforce Lot’s descendants.**

**Do to them as you did to Midian, as you did to Sisera and Jabin at the river Kishon, who perished at Endor and became like dung on the ground...**

**Make them like tumbleweed, my God, like chaff before the wind.**

**As fire consumes the forest or a flame sets the mountains ablaze, so pursue them with Your tempest and terrify them with Your storm.**

**Cover their faces with shame, LORD, so that they will seek**

**Your name.**

**May they ever be ashamed and dismayed; may they perish in disgrace.**

**Let them know that You, whose name is the LORD, that You alone are the Most High over all the earth.**

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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