

Naso – Yom Yerushalayim 5779

BS"D Parashat Naso – Yom Yerushalayim 5779

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Blessings from Zion

Two parshiot, Be'chukotai in Vayikra and Ki Tavo in Devarim, contain the harsh reproach and severe punishments that await the Jewish nation if they violate the eternal covenant entered into with the God of Israel.

Devarim 28, 45-47:

וְכָל אֵלֶּה יָבִיאוּ אֵלַיִךְ וְרָדְפוּ אַחֲרֶיךָ וְהִנָּחֲמוּ אֹתְךָ וְהִשְׁחָדוּ אֶתְּךָ וְהִנָּחֲמוּ אֹתְךָ (וְכָל אֵלֶּה יָבִיאוּ אֵלַיִךְ וְרָדְפוּ אַחֲרֶיךָ וְהִנָּחֲמוּ אֹתְךָ וְהִשְׁחָדוּ אֶתְּךָ וְהִנָּחֲמוּ אֹתְךָ
:וְכָל אֵלֶּה יָבִיאוּ אֵלַיִךְ וְרָדְפוּ אַחֲרֶיךָ וְהִנָּחֲמוּ אֹתְךָ וְהִשְׁחָדוּ אֶתְּךָ וְהִנָּחֲמוּ אֹתְךָ
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45: All these curses will come on you. They will pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed, because you did not obey the Lord your God and observe the commands and decrees he gave you.

46: They will be a sign and a wonder to you and your descendants forever.

47: Because you did not serve the Lord your God with simcha and tuv lev (good heart) even in good times.

“Simcha and u’betuv lev” do not refer to simple joy and appreciation. Moshe was referring to the absence of exuberance and enthusiasm when serving Hashem.

An Exuberant Yom Yerushalayim

On Yom Yerushalayim, the 28th of Iyar, I had the distinct honor and privilege of twice experiencing exuberance and enthusiasm on this amazing day. In the early morning, I took part in the Shacharit service sponsored by the Jerusalem Municipality and the OU of Yerushalayim, on the beautiful promenade in East Talpiot, overlooking the Temple Mount. There were close to 2000 men and women, with Hallel set to music led by the renowned Shlomo Katz. Every chapter was accompanied by circles of dancing daveners, whose exuberance and enthusiasm did not wane even under the brilliant Iyar sun.

In the afternoon, I witnessed wave after wave of young people from all over the land passing through the Jewish Quarter and other entrances to the Old City making their way to the Kotel; numbering over a hundred thousand. Most held our national flag and the exuberance and enthusiasm was contagious.

I marveled at the great merit that HaShem has granted me as I sat in my home overlooking the central square in the Jewish Quarter witnessing all these young Jewish men and women making their way with unlimited exuberance and enthusiasm over the indescribable miracle our generation has experienced in the reunification of Jerusalem under Jewish sovereignty for the first time in over 2000 years.

Deniers of Medinat Yisrael

But a dark cloud was hovering over my simcha, because among the great numbers giving thanks to HaShem for His miracles, I did not see even one chareidi participant. It is the dry, dead souls of people who cannot stand in ecstasy before the unprecedented survival of our people for 2000 years in galut, finally returning home to Eretz Yisrael and Medinat Yisrael, whose capital is the city of King David!

Moshe Rabbeinu declared in the Devarim Tochacha, that all the ills that would befall our people, including the destruction of the two temples and the 2000 years galut, would be the result of our lack of exuberance and enthusiasm in being HaShem's chosen people. On the personal level I have many friends, including learned rabbanim, who subscribe to the chareidi mind set. At the time we were reciting Hallel, in the Chareidi yeshivot and batei knesset where my friends and acquaintances prayed, they were reciting the Tachanun chapters, which are traditionally deleted on days even of limited simcha.

I often wonder who is more culpable and blameworthy: the uneducated non-observant Jew who believes in the Jewish god but is not convinced that He is the source of halacha, or the adherents to the chareidi outlook that recognizes HaShem as the source of halacha but denies the day to day involvement of HaShem in the ongoing ups and downs of the Jewish nation. In my many discussions with chareidi rabbis and leaders their classic view is, "do not discuss the Shoah (Holocaust) because it was a decree from HaShem; whereas, we can be against the Medina since it is the creation of the United Nations".

The infamous Holocaust is the involvement of HaShem in our history, but not the return of over six million of our people home after 2000 years of galut?!

It returns me to the days of my youth as a student in the

Rabbi Jacob Joseph Yeshiva HS, in the lower east side of New York. I had great respect for my rabbis' erudition. In fact, I was the only student in my class who always addressed my rabbis in the third person: der Rav hut gezugt, der Rav hat gelerent etc. (perhaps that was the reason I as awarded the Talmud prize at graduation).

But I knew deep down that there was something very wrong. They never brought up the issue of Eretz Yisrael and certainly not Medinat Yisrael. In their eyes it was taboo for young American Jews to have their brains infiltrated by the "disease" called Zionism. This anti-educational disaster continued into the five years I studied at the Bet Yosef Yeshiva in Boro Park.

What saved me and my brother Meir from being plunged into the deep abyss of apathy and gloom despite the yeshivot we attended was my family. During the years leading up to the establishment of the Medina, my parents were very involved in the purchase of weapons for the Etzel underground organization, and sending them clandestinely to Eretz Yisrael, while the U.S. placed an embargo on weapon transfers. Those years in my parents' home formed the thoughts and ideals which I maintain to this day and have passed on to our children and to their children.

Every year on Yom Yerushalayim the words of King David in Tehillim 147,12-14 take on a more profound meaning:

:ה' יְהוָה מְחַיֶּה הַמֵּת וְהַחַיִּים יְהוָה יְהוָה (פס')

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Extol the Lord, Jerusalem; praise your God, Zion.

He strengthens the bars of your gates and blesses your sons within you.

He grants peace to your borders and satisfies you with the finest of wheat.

With blessings from Zion.

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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