

Pesach 5780

BS"D Pesach 5780

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

THE COVID-19 PLAGUE, PESACH AND MEDINAT YISRAEL

Two questions:

The Gemara (Brachot 60b) quotes Rabbi Akiva who said,

אדם צריך להיזהר שיהיה אומר כל יום ויום וכל שעה ושעה וכל רגע ורגע וכל דבר ודבר וכל ענין וענין וכל מקום ומקום וכל זמן וזמן וכל שעה ושעה וכל רגע ורגע וכל דבר ודבר וכל ענין וענין וכל מקום ומקום וכל זמן וזמן

One should accustom himself to say, "All that HaShem does is for the best".

1- In the midst of this terrible Covid 19 plague when the Angel of Death reaps his daily harvest of in the thousands the world over, where is the discernable "silver lining" where the Jews in the holy land can say "All that HaShem does is for the best"?

2- In parashat Ki Tisa (Shemot 33) Moshe beseeches HaShem to continue to provide Am Yisrael with His intimate vigilance and not appoint an angel to the task.

And HaShem agrees.

Moshe continues with an extraordinary request (verse 16)

וְכִי־יִשְׁמַעֲכֶם־וְיִשְׁמַעֲכֶם־וְיִשְׁמַעֲכֶם־וְיִשְׁמַעֲכֶם־וְיִשְׁמַעֲכֶם
וְיִשְׁמַעֲכֶם־וְיִשְׁמַעֲכֶם־וְיִשְׁמַעֲכֶם־וְיִשְׁמַעֲכֶם־וְיִשְׁמַעֲכֶם

How will it be known that You are pleased with me and with Your nation? only if You accompany us and exhibit partiality (discrimination and predilection) towards us over all the other nations of the world.

And HaShem responded (verse 17)

וַיֹּאמֶר־יְהוָה־אֶל־מֹשֶׁה־כֹּל־אֲשֶׁר־אָמַרְתָּ־אֲנִי־עוֹשֶׂה־לָּךְ

And HaShem said to Moshe even this request I shall fulfill

In light of HaShem's agreement to act with partiality towards the Jewish Nation, why are we also suffering from the plague like the other nations?

I would answer in the spirit of the Kohanic blessing (we recite every day at least once). There are three parts to the Kohanic blessing:

.וְיִשְׁמַעֲכֶם־וְיִשְׁמַעֲכֶם־וְיִשְׁמַעֲכֶם־וְיִשְׁמַעֲכֶם־וְיִשְׁמַעֲכֶם

.וְיִשְׁמַעֲכֶם־וְיִשְׁמַעֲכֶם־וְיִשְׁמַעֲכֶם־וְיִשְׁמַעֲכֶם־וְיִשְׁמַעֲכֶם

'וְיִשְׁמַעֲכֶם־וְיִשְׁמַעֲכֶם־וְיִשְׁמַעֲכֶם־וְיִשְׁמַעֲכֶם־וְיִשְׁמַעֲכֶם

May HaShem bless you, and watch over you

May Hashem shine His countenance upon you and be gracious to you

May HaShem lift up His face unto you, and give you peace

The Jewish nation excels in three qualities, when given half a chance:

Wherever we are, we rise to the highest echelons of society with financial success, with intellectual prowess, and our spiritual nature.

Each of these outstanding qualities, as blessed as they are, gave rise in the past, in the present and probably in the future to jealousy, hatred and murderous anti-Semitism.

So, the Kohen blesses the nation:

May HaShem bless you with social status and financial success, but also watch over you that they bring you no harm.

May HaShem shine his countenance upon you with great intellectual gifts, but may HaShem be gracious to you that no harm should come because of it.

May HaShem lift up His face unto you with profound spirituality, and nevertheless enjoy a life of peace.

What I see at this time is that HaShem is punishing the gentile world for many things, and the list is as long as history. However, if only the other nations would suffer and Medinat Yisrael would be conspicuously well off with peace, prosperity and good health, it would not take long for the goyim to reach their (incorrect) conclusion that the plague is a Jewish plot on the lines of the Elders of Zion. Not far different from a situation where a teacher has a son in his class, and the son's bad luck is that his father has to

include the son in the collective punishments of the class so as not to endanger the boy with reprisals from the class.

The above at the same time a simplistic explanation of events, but also a very profound one based on the unique, intimate relationship between the Creator and His chosen people, as in the words of Rabbi Akiva:

One should accustom himself to say, "All that HaShem does is for the best'.

May no harm come to our people and may the light at the end of the tunnel be so bright to lead us to the redemption of the Jewish nation, when we shall all be together in Eretz haKodesh.

Chag Pesach Kasher ve'Samayach

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