

# Pikudei 5771

## BS"D Parashat Vayakel and Parashat Pekudei 5771

The reader of this week's divrei Torah might , at first, feel that the ideas brought here are detached or disjointed; but with a little patience, the ideas come together.

There are two vectors at work today. Both are aimed at each other and will hit – like two trajectories dispatched from opposite points on the globe – and at the moment of impact, the world will be forever changed.

One is the inevitable teshuva (repentance) of all Jews as they return to HaShem and the Torah, and the other is Amalek and his coalition who will declare war on the State of Israel and world Jewry.

At the point of impact, those Jews who remain alive in the galut will return to Eretz Yisrael, and the Jews already in Eretz Yisrael will ascend to ever greater heights of kedusha (sanctity). Amalek with his coalition of descendants from Yishmael and Aisav will no longer exist, while the gentiles who never harmed the Jewish people will remain and share in the blessings that Am Yisrael will bring to the world.

I will explain.

An important principle in life: When you don't know where you are going, any road will take you there.

No one knows where the world is heading: the spread of democracy and human rights – probably not! Islamic fascism and a return to the dark ages – more certain! Placing the blame on Medinat Yisrael for all the world's woes is the most probable.

In the delicate balance between HaShem's knowledge of the future vs. Man's freedom to choose, a dilemma exists as impossible to reconcile as an encounter between an

irresistible force and an immovable object. HaShem's intervention in human affairs can be divided into three categories:

1. Areas that are in the sole domain of people, as the Gemara (Ketubot 30a) says, "All is in the hand of God except for heat and cold" (common sicknesses) and (Berachot 33b) "All is in the hand of God except for one's yirat shamayim (the fear [awe] of God)."
2. Areas that are in HaShem's domain, but at times He permits people to control them. The Gemara (Ta'anit 2a) says there are three "keys" which are in HaShem's sole domain: rain, the moment of birth and resurrection. Nevertheless, HaShem temporarily transferred sovereignty over rain and the ability to restore life to one dead person to Eliyahu Hanavi (Elijah the Prophet), and the ability to restore life to two dead people to Eliyahu's protege, Elisha the Prophet.
3. Areas which are in the sole domain of HaShem and over which no human has ever had or ever will have control: The day of Shabbat that returns every 7 days, in contrast to the holidays which are declared in accordance with when the high court declares the new month; and the sanctity of the Temple area which is permanent as stated by the Rambam (Bait Habechira 6:16).

Shabbat and Yerushalayim are alluded to in the first word of the Torah ?????? whose letters make up the the two words of Shabbat and Yareh, which is the original name of Yerushalayim.

There is a third entity that is under the sole domain of HaShem – the day-to-day survival of Am Yisrael. Despite what has transpired in history, nothing has ever happened to the Jewish people or will happen – as a nation or as individuals – that was not in the sole domain of HaShem.

These three entities – Am Yisrael, Shabbat and Yerushalayim, the ultimate seat of the Mishkan – are grouped together in the

beginning of parashat Vayakhel. Here the **Jewish people** are commanded to abide by all the laws of **Shabbat**, immediately followed by the laws of the **Mishkan** which was permanently placed in **Yerushalayim** and whose sanctity was shared with the Bet Hamikdash.

We shall return to this.

The subject of aydim (witnesses) takes up a large part of Talmudic study. Who may serve as witnesses, the number of witnesses necessary to establish facts in the court, their signature on official halachic documents and their function in executing the courts' decisions are just a few of the nuances in this very wide-reaching matter.

Were we permitted to rank the various objects and utensils in the Mishkan, the Aron would probably be number one. It stood in the Kodesh Kadoshim (the Holy of Holies), it housed the tablets of the Ten Commandments and was covered by the two keruvim (cherubim) arising out of a golden cover and all sculptured by hand from a single block of gold.

The seemingly passive rectangular container of the Aron was not passive at all. It fulfilled a very active function, not different than witnesses testifying in court on the spiritual level of the Jewish nation, as stated in the Gemara (Bava Batra 92a):

*How*

*were the keruvim placed?*

*Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Elazar expressed contradictory opinions. Based on a verse in the Torah, one said that the Keruvim faced each other, while the other rabbi, based on a verse in the Book of Chronicles said that they stood with their backs to each other facing the wall. The Gemara states that there is no contradiction. The rabbi who said that they*

*faced each other was referring to the time when the Jewish people fulfilled the wishes of HaShem, but the Keruvim turned away from each other miraculously when the Jewish people did not fulfill HaShem's wishes.*

HaShem "employed" the two Keruvim to serve as a barometer of how He perceived the devotional level of Am Yisrael, in our role as God's chosen people. They also filled the functions of halachic **witnesses** (aydim). Every year, when the Kohen Gadol (High Priest) would depart from the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur, he would relate what the position of the Keruvim was. If they faced each other, it was a sign that we had found favor in HaShem's eyes; but if they turned away from each other, it gave testimony of HaShem's displeasure with us.

The Keruvim-witnesses were HaShem's way of giving notice to His chosen people through the service of the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur and the prophets.

This applies to Am Yisrael, but how does Hashem warn the nations of the world who have no prophets or Keruvim?

Not long ago, "nature" showed its zeal when huge areas of eastern Australia were ravaged with unprecedented flooding, and again when the second largest city in New Zealand was nearly destroyed by a powerful earthquake and its secondary after-quakes.

Flooding and earthquakes, and both in far-flung places on the globe, far away from the major power centers of America, Europe and the Middle East.

### **What does it mean?**

In the case of halachic witnesses, there were two functions they fulfilled in addition to their testimony. Physical punishment could not be inflicted upon a sinner, if he was not pre-warned by at least two witnesses; and in the case of

capital crimes, the witnesses served as the executioners.

The floods that engulfed homes, streets and people and the tremors that shook the foundations of cities are two witnesses that were sent by HaShem to warn humanity what awaits them if they deal inappropriately with Medinat Yisrael and the Jewish people.

Two examples:

1. The Dutch Parliament intends to prohibit Jewish ritual slaughter (shechita). Lest they forget, approximately 27% of the Netherlands is below sea level and is home to over 60% of the country's population of 15.8 million people.
2. Egypt, which is mentioned by the prophet Yechezkel (chapter 32) as the initiator of the final war against the Jews in Eretz Yisrael and the first to be destroyed, is at the mercy of the Aswan Dam situated to the south of the Nile Valley. The dam holds back 6 trillion cubic feet of water in Lake Nasser, which when released would race down the Nile Valley where over 90% of the Egyptian population lives.

The faults above, below and between the planet's tectonic plates are waiting to fulfill their calling as God's witnesses. We know that Iran is crisscrossed with these land faults.

The release of human energy that we are witnessing now in Arab countries could, at any moment, turn against Medinat Yisrael. It would not take much to twist a bit more the already twisted Arab mind into believing that the uprisings now spreading over the Arab world were instigated and engineered by Israel.

The embattled president of Yemen is already on record as saying,

*"I am going to reveal a secret. There is an operations room*

*in Tel Aviv with the aim of destabilizing the Arab world. The operations room is in Tel Aviv and run by the White House."*

When (not "if") that happens, the United Nations will join in active support of the Arab initiatives, including military moves, against the Jewish State. The United Nations will declare that the *apartheid* State of Israel is guilty for refusing to commit national suicide by retreating beyond the 1967 borders.

**So now it all comes together.**

International pressure will build up against Medinat Yisrael. We will be ostracized from the family of nations, as predicted by Bilam when he said that the Jewish people are "a nation that dwells alone".

Just before this momentous impact, the Jewish people will turn their eyes heavenward for salvation – just as we have done so many times in the past. HaShem will have compassion on His children Yisrael and release the ever-present witnesses of water and earthquakes in the performance of the most awesome miracles before our very eyes, and evil will be eradicated from the world.

These are not predictions of what will happen generations from now; they will happen very soon. The situation will bring out the best in the authentic Jewish people, who will be steadfast in their belief that Hashem will not forsake His chosen people in Eretz Yisrael. It will bring out the worst in the *airuv rav* among us who will try to find refuge in the *galut*.

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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