

Pinchas 5779

BS"D Parashat Pinchas 5779

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

The Jewish State of the Mashiach

In 1948, the Chief Rabbinate of Israel published its official prayer for the State of Israel. To this day, it is said on Shabbat and holidays in synagogues the world over, by people who recognize the “hand” of HaShem in our return to Eretz Yisrael. However, there is a big story behind the prayer, as related to me by an individual who was privy to the events.

David Ben Gurion, Israel’s first prime minister, turned to the Chief Rabbi Yitzchak Herzog z”l to recommend a prayer for the Medina which would be accepted by the Israeli government as its official text.

Rav Herzog turned to Shmuel Yosef Agnon, who would eventually receive a Nobel prize for Hebrew literature, to submit a version of the prayer. After reviewing the proposal, the Chief Rabbi passed it on to the Prime Minister who rejected it off hand. The point of contention was the concluding line that Rav Herzog himself had added, which read – עַתָּה כִּי־מֵתָּה מֵתָּה (until the advent of the Mashiach), intimating that the political, social and religious aspects of the present Medina – as enormous and miraculous as they were – were only a stage in the final redemption of the Jewish nation but not its final destiny.

The secular Ben Gurion denied the existence of any mashiach.

He believed that the secular, socialist State was the culmination of the 2000-year aspirations and prayers of the Jewish people. Because the Chief Rabbi refused to omit the final sentence, there is still no official prayer passed by any government. For some strange reason, the official file of these events is stamped with the word Shamur (restricted).

This issue is relevant because, in my view, it lies at the heart of what is now transpiring in Israel's political system.

Despite the many discordant outlooks among the religious factions, we all agree on the basics including: Shabbat, the 613 mitzvot from Mount Sinai, and certainly on the eventual appearance of the Mashiach as stipulated by Rambam in his Thirteen Cardinal Principles of Faith and many other sources.

The eventual Jewish State of the Mashiach is vastly different than today's liberal, democratic, progressive society whose fundamental tenet is equality among all its citizens and prohibiting discrimination based on religion, sexual orientation, color, race and political leanings.

Our political representatives are elected by popular vote, and the judges who sit on the Supreme Court are appointed by their peers and make their decisions based on their own personal views of morality and social justice.

Shabbat can be observed or desecrated in the public domain according to the majority vote in the Knesset where non-Jews participate. Same-sex marriages can be deemed legal or not based on the vote of the Knesset and without considering the 3000-year-old halachic ruling of the Jewish nation. The underpinnings of Israeli law are Ottoman and British based, while the underlying legal principles of the Torah's jurisprudence in civil matters are largely ignored.

There is no denying that today's Medina has progressed by giant steps. However, ethical and moral outlooks will have to change, and a new direction taken in order to prepare us for

the final stage of our redemption.

In the classic Torah society, equality among different peoples is not priority. On the contrary, Jews are dominant in all segments of life. A non-Jew can live here only by fulfilling certain conditions and attaining the status of ger toshav (a resident alien) through a bet din (religious court). In times of military threat, yeshiva students are not eligible for deferment, and the Gemara becomes an essential piece of equipment when jumping out of a plane, and so much more.

Approximately two months remain before the second round of elections, the first having ended without being able to form a viable government. This second round could possibly end deadlocked, forcing another round of elections, ad nauseam.

Could this be the turning point at which HaShem will usher in a new era leading up to the long-awaited final redemption of our nation?

If the upcoming election is again inconclusive, could the resulting political chaos encourage our enemies to seize the moment of our weakness? A political vacuum cannot maintain itself for very long. As a consequence, is it reasonable to envision the army replacing a civilian government and all parameters of rule changing?

But changing into what?

The changes will not be initiated by rational decisions of learned ministers seeking resolutions to problems. They will be the inevitable outcome of new realities in our lives.

I see a militarization of our society caused by the necessity to cope with the violence and hatred of enemies within and without. Islam is fueling the religious fanaticism of our Arab population through the ongoing messages of hate being fed to them in schools and mosques and their media.

Military draft will be replaced with a law stipulating that every Jewish male citizen who has reached the age of 18 will automatically be a soldier in the IDF and serve according to the military's needs. Those who refuse to fulfill the call to duty will be severely punished, including permanent expulsion from the country or imprisonment.

All Arab towns and neighborhoods will be under military rule.

All our educational institutions will be under the authority of the IDF with emphasis placed on pre-military training and patriotism. The Tanach will be the basis of the new-old patriotism.

Many people will choose to leave the country rather than commit to a more Jewish way of life. Aliya will increase dramatically as it becomes impossible for Jews to live in Europe and other places, and Arab towns will be expropriated for the purpose of housing the new olim.

In its first 70 years, the State of Israel strived to be Athens. The time will come for us to become Sparta.

Rambam (Hilchot Melachim) describes the actions that will determine who is the Mashiach.

He will be a Torah scholar but also knowledgeable in military strategy and tactics. He will lead the nation in miraculous military victories. He will be a charismatic individual who will return the Jews to the Torah and rebuild the Bet HaMikdash. Rambam is obviously describing a time when radical changes will occur in Eretz Yisrael.

And what will the world at large look like? What changes will humanity have to go through? What will happen to the Jewish communities in the galut?

These are all huge issues open to speculation. However, what interests me is the future of the Jewish people who have, with

the help of HaShem, returned home, because only in Eretz Yisrael will the fate of the Jewish people – as well as the fate of all humanity – be decided.

In our parasha, the restrained and scholarly Pinchas saved the nation from unbridled heavenly punishment not by standing at a podium and expounding a learned drasha – which was in the realm of Moshe and Aharon – but by using a spear to end the desecration of HaShem's name. Our tradition states that Pinchas is Eliyahu the prophet who will pave the way for the Mashiach.

Is this the message for our generation that the geula (final redemption) will be in the spirit of Pinchas-Eliyahu? I believe so! Will it be soon? Yes! but not soon enough!

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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