

Re'eh 5777

BS"D Parashat Re'eh 5777

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Godly Compromise

An authentic time-tested Jewish mantra: If you don't make Kiddush, then HaShem will deal with you via Havdalah (separation).

Compromise is not only an integral part of human relations, it was included by HaShem into the very fabric of Creation. The Midrash states that HaShem had originally planned to relate to His creations in accordance to the quality of strict justice – You trespass a command of the infinite Creator; You die! However, HaShem saw that humanity would be short lived if judged by the quality of strict justice, so He merged it with the quality of compassion, as we learn from the Talmud Yerushalmi (Makot chapter 2):

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They asked Wisdom, “what is the sinner’s fate?” And Wisdom answered with the verse (Mishlay 13,21), “Wickedness pursues the sinner.”

They asked Prophecy, “what is the sinner’s fate?” And Prophecy answered with the verse (Yechezkel 18,4), “the sinning soul shall die”.

They asked the Torah, and the Torah answered, "let him offer a sin offering".

They asked the Holy One Blessed be He, "what is the sinners fate?" And HaShem replied, "let him repent and be forgiven".

All the elements in this midrash – wisdom, prophecy, and Torah, answered appropriately for an ideal society with a few individual sinners, however, HaShem knows that the compulsions of men are evil, and the ways of wisdom, prophecy and Torah would lead to an early demise of humanity. He, therefore, compromised the judgments suitable for a perfect society in favor of a world whose occupants possess evil instincts, but with the potential to repent and return to the path of HaShem,

Another example of Godly compromise is alluded to in the Midrash Tanchuma (Eikev, chap. 11.). The Jewish people know how and when to keep the respective mitzvot to the most minute detail, but even the greatest rabbi cannot explain the essence of any mitzva. Countless numbers of Jews from time immemorial sacrificed their lives in defense of their right to keep the Torah, yet not one knew why shrimp is prohibited, nor why a mikveh drives away tuma, nor why leavened bread causes the dire punishment of Karet on Pesach.

Why?

The Midrash relates that when the people sinned with the golden calf, HaShem informed Moshe that He was revoking His decision to give the Torah to Am Yisrael, and Moshe argued that HaShem cannot renege on His promise. So there transpired a colossal tug-of-war. The Midrash explains that each luach (stone tablet) of the Ten Commandments was six tefachim long (a little more than half a meter) and three wide. Hashem held the top two tefachim in an attempt to pull the luchot to Himself, while Moshe held the bottom two tefachim, struggling to bring them to earth, and between HaShem and Moshe the luchot shattered.

What is the meaning of this Midrash?

Initially, it was Hashem's intention to give to the Jewish people Torah with full understanding of the mitzvot and their spiritual consequences in this and the next world. But in the wake of the Golden Calf, Hashem told Moshe of His decision not to give the Torah to Am Yisrael.

Moshe refused to accept this reversal of world history and thus began the inconceivable struggle between finite man and the infinite Creator, characterized by HaShem grasping the top of the luchot and Moshe, the bottom.

The breaking of the stone tablets symbolizes a compromise agreed upon between the two sides – Am Yisrael would receive the Torah, but without understanding of the profound spiritual nature of the mitzvot. Hence to this day, we keep the mitzvot and have no idea what they mean, and what their consequences are beyond the superficial reasons laid forth for them. Kashrut, para aduma, tuma and tahara, etc., are all mysteries enveloped in an enigma.

Historically, the limits of HaShem's compromise are reached when Jews consciously act to confine, restrain, restrict, impede, hinder or retard the nation's advance to our destiny in Eretz Yisrael. The 80% of the nation who refused to leave Egypt died during the plague of darkness; the entire generation of 600 thousand men died when they refused to enter the land because of the Meraglim; the Levites were punished when very few returned with Ezra the Scribe at the time of the second Bet Hamikdash; and the Shoah occurred when the gates of the land were open in the middle of the twentieth century, and only a trickle of Jews returned.

HaShem in his infinite patience suffers the disloyalty of the majority in the merit of the loyal minority of righteous men and women of every generation, but there is an end even to HaShem's patience. It comes in the wake of the compromise Jews

make in galut where they refrain from making “Kiddush” by returning home, so Hashem is now making “Havdalah,” as attested to by the 70% of Jews who marry gentiles in the USA.

Our parasha begins

וְהָיָה כִּי יֵרָאֶה לְךָ הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה בְּרָכָה וּכְלָמָה

Perceive! I am presenting before you on this day a blessing and a curse.

It would appear from this verse that there are two alternatives – to be blessed or to be cursed. However, there is a third possibility which, in fact, is the most prevalent – to be blessed and cursed at the same time.

Jews in the galut, mostly in the US, are financially successful and get wealthier by the day. But while their material life is blessed, their spiritual nature is being cursed, as attested to by the distance that separates them from any thought of returning to the land that was set aside for the Jewish nation by the Creator Himself.

HaShem has the privilege to make compromises because He is the Creator. However, we as created beings are not so privileged, so we must follow the spirit and letter of the Torah.

Remember: If you don't make Kiddush, then HaShem will deal with you with Havdalah.

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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