


Shoftim 5771

BS"D Parashat Shoftim 5771

Part A:


Devarim 20:16-18

 *Completely destroy them—the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites as the LORD your God has commanded you*

*So that they **will not instruct you** to follow all the detestable things they do in worshiping their gods, and you will sin against the LORD your God*

For the last several days, I have been receiving requests from readers in the United States asking my opinion regarding the relatively large number and ferocity of natural disasters there: tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, fires, etc.

I have my views on the matter, as I am certain others have, but I must preface my thoughts with the acknowledgement that we mortals have no inkling why HaShem does anything, as the prophet Yishayahu (55:8-9) declared:

 *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

The words of Yishayahu can be described schematically to an ingenious professor of psychology who wishes to investigate the workings of the childhood mind. He brings together a class of 5-year-olds, provides them with paint, scissors, paper, paste, blocks etc., and leaves them alone for 6 hours in order to see how they develop as a society. Will they form a

hierarchy of the more aggressive and dominant children ruling over the passive ones, and will there be order or disorder? At the end of the time, the professor finds that some children produced clever pictures, others were beaten up. Some were sleeping and others were cleaning up; but none of them were capable of figuring out why the professor had put them there. And even if the professor would have explained the matter to the children, not even one would have been capable of understanding what he said.

We are not very different from those children. Because aside from the wide-brush generality that disasters are the consequences of sin, we lack the ability to comprehend why a particular sin causes a certain reaction – except those matters of which we are informed by our sages of old who had ruach hakodesh.

To return to the natural disasters (or rather the disasters of nature) in the United States, one could begin the sin count with the concept of Manifest Destiny that drove the early **settlers** (mitnachlim) beyond the **west bank** of the Mississippi towards the Pacific Ocean, and in their wake left a trail of Indian blood from “sea to shining sea”. Or more recent transgressions, such as the US arms embargo placed on Israel in 1948, when we were fighting for our very lives, or their earlier refusal in World War Two to bomb the concentration camps or even the tracks leading to them. However, I prefer to see the matter in the light of what is happening presently on the background of Biblical precedence.

We are all familiar with the story of the prophet Yona (Jonah) and the whale. Yona was dispatched by HaShem to deliver a spiritual message to the people of Ninveh (the city of Mosul in today’s Iraq). For reasons which are not relevant to this message, Yona attempts to circumvent HaShem’s command by escaping from Eretz Yisrael and thereby to lose his status as a prophet. He embarks on a ship bound for Tarshis (in Greece) and a great storm broke out putting the ship in immediate

danger of breaking up and the death of all the voyagers. At some point, Yona descends into the lower deck and falls asleep. The ship's captain arouses him in an attempt to ascertain who is the cause of this unnatural occurrence. Yona admits that he is the cause, and informs the captain that all the innocent seamen will die unless he is cast into the stormy waters. The seamen try to bring the ship back to port, to no avail, and eventually realize that they have no choice but to throw Yona overboard. At the moment Yona touches the water, the storm subsides as if it never occurred. The men on the ship realized the presence of HaShem, and each one converted to Judaism.

The rest is history.

Yona was swallowed by a great fish, and while in its stomach deep under water, so far away from the light of day, Yona's pleas were heard by HaShem. The fish ejected Yona near the shore, from where Yona went on to deliver HaShem's message to the people of Ninveh.

This is the story, but it arouses a very disturbing question: The captain and his crew were not partners to Yona's sin. So why were their lives in immediate and dire jeopardy over a man for whom they held no responsibility?

The answer, as difficult as it might seem, is that despite the fact that they were not responsible for Yona's sin, they were the ones who provided Yona with the means to evade HaShem's command. And they were saved only when they were no longer the conduit for Yona's escape from HaShem.

The United States is a great and mighty ship, but it is the unwitting conduit for the Jews to escape their Godly destiny.

The God-fearing Yonas of Boro Park, Lakewood, Monsey, and other places have descended to the lowest deck of irrational behavior in order to circumvent their historic mission to close the door on the cursed galut. More ominous are the Jews

who are far from Torah and mitzvot and are escaping their historic mission with nearly 70% of them marrying gentiles.

The story of Yona is the haftara that is read at the Mincha (afternoon) service on Yom Kippur – the Day of Atonement.

There must be a good reason for this.

But there is an element in the Yona allegory that distracts it from mirroring the present situation in the American galut. Yona did not have spiritual mentors on board – as do the religious Jews in the US – to advise him to stay put because the water outside (in Eretz Yisrael) is cold and dangerous, or that his escape from HaShem is in fact a mitzva, so he should wait on board for the Mashiach to save him.

If my analysis is correct, the conclusion is that the United States would do well to convince its Jewish citizens that it would be preferable if they fulfilled their Godly function of serving as HaShem's chosen people in Eretz Yisrael.

However, that will not happen in the foreseeable future, even though there are many historic precedents for Jews being "asked" to leave a country.

The other possibility, that the Jews would voluntarily leave the US for Eretz Yisrael is sheer nonsense.

So, the good citizens of the United States, for no transgression of their own, will have to hold on tight as their ship of state rolls to and fro until their Jewish "Yonas" comply and implement the historic mission imposed on them to return home to the real Promised Land.

It is interesting to note in the verses quoted in the beginning of this message:

However, in the cities of the nations the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not leave alive anything that breathes.

Completely destroy them—the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites as the LORD your God has commanded you

*So that they **will not instruct you** to follow all the detestable things they do in worshiping their gods, and you will sin against the LORD your God*

HaShem did not destroy the pagan Canaanites “for all the detestable things they do”, but because they will “**instruct you**” and influence you – even in a passive manner – to follow their ways.

Remember a “kiss of death” is death.

In closing: I can understand the reasons for rejecting my conclusion. However, one cannot deny two facts. 1- There are approximately one million Orthodox Jews in the US, the vast majority of whom do not consider Aliya as a possibility in their lives; 2- we are losing the Reform, Conservative and unaffiliated Jewish young people to assimilation at an unprecedented rate.

There is a reason why this is happening; who is to blame?

Part B:

Today marks the close of the Moslem month of Ramadan. It is impressive to see the huge numbers of adherents of that faith – over 1.2 billion people – as they fulfill their customs.

The Sunni Moslem sect, which constitutes a majority, have a hierarchy of holy places: Number one is Mecca, followed by Medina and a close third Al Quds (Jerusalem).

Who has not seen pictures of three million Moslems from around the world walking around the Kaaba in Mecca during the Haj period? On the Fridays of Ramadan, the Temple Mount turns into a sea of Arab-Moslem humanity with up to 200,000 people bowing

on their prayer rugs. On the way down from the mountain, this mass of people streams under the windows of my bet kneset on Al Wad street, in a seemingly endless mass, in stark contrast to the 30-40 people who make up our bet kneset's Leil Shabbat (Friday night) minyan.

The huge attendance of believers at mosques makes quite an impression, when compared to the low attendance in churches and shuls.

Islam is the fastest-growing religion in the world, and slowly but surely is spreading its religious doctrines as contained in Sha'ari law and dress codes.

When taken all together one gets the feeling that God cannot be oblivious to the profound religious feelings of these people as they pray and bless their alah with such fervor and reverence.

But dear friends, nothing is further from the truth.

The Moslems are total "rejects" with no standing in the spiritual realm of HaShem, for one simple reason.

They pray five times a day, or so they say, and like us they pray for good health, long life, parnassa (livelihood), respectful children, peace and tranquility.

But here the comparison ends. For every one of their prayers and in their hearts is a supplication to their false god that he destroy the State of Israel and annihilate world Jewry. It is like being invited to a Beduin tent and being served fabulous food according to their tradition of hospitality; but when leaving the tent being stabbed in the back – which is also part of their tradition.

It is a continuation of the age-old hatred of the uncivilized, merciless Yishmael who was rejected by HaShem from any spiritual connection to Avraham, in favor of the holy son

Yitzchak, the spiritual heir to his father Avraham and mother Sarah.

The irreconcilable spiritual rejection of Yishmael has taken a psychological twist, whereby Islam performs extreme and irrational religious acts to attempt to prove that the rejection was unwarranted. Extreme, unmerciful punishment for even minor infractions, Shi'ite bloodletting, "honor killings", the awe of death over life, suicide bombers, the list is endless.

So don't be duped by the external trappings of their prayer rugs in the middle of the street or their seemingly modest dress. They are the scourge of today's world, the Amalek of humanity and the enemies of all peoples who crave real peace and true spiritual life.

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

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