

Shoftim 5780

BS"D Parashat Shoftim 5780

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Israel-UAE Peace Agreement

The Gemara in Bava Batra 12b relates in the name of the illustrious amora Rabbi Yochanan:

מֵהַיּוֹם שֶׁנִּשְׁמַד הַבַּיִת הַשֵּׁנִי הָיָה הַנְּבוּאָה נִתְּנָה לְכֹלֵי אִשְׁמוֹנִיּוֹת וְלְכֹלֵי יְלָדִים : מֵהַיּוֹם שֶׁנִּשְׁמַד הַבַּיִת הַשֵּׁנִי הָיָה הַנְּבוּאָה נִתְּנָה לְכֹלֵי אִשְׁמוֹנִיּוֹת וְלְכֹלֵי יְלָדִים .

From the day that the (first) Bet Hamikdash was destroyed, prophecy was transferred from prophets to fools and children.

That is a remarkable statement from such a profound talmid chacham, what did the Rabbi mean?

One need not go very far to understand. Prophecy was never given to fools nor to children. However, we see in our own time that when an individual imbued with a higher sense of spirituality and morality makes pronouncements of a spiritual and ideological nature, like Shabbat, family purity or aliya to the holy land, most people react to the affect, "He talks like a fool. Grow up man and stop with your obsolete, passé, antiquated, and archaic ideas".

In fact, it was not much better in the years preceding the first Temple's destruction. The Navi Yeshayahu prophesied at the time of four kings, Uziyahu, Yotam, Achaz and Chizkiyahu. Achaz was no one to write home about but the other three were righteous, except for one big error that was performed by Uziyahu. However, the nation as a whole was steeped in idolatry and other transgressions and took the words of the prophets as coming from fools and children. And things did not improve during the time of his successor Yirmiyahu who prophesied until the Temple's destruction at the time of King Tzidkiyahu.

In our time rabbis, regardless of whether they are the greatest or mediocre, have little influence on the decisions of the Israeli government. The best a rabbi can do is to warn whoever would listen to him regarding the pending dangers inherent in the government's "non-Torah" policies.

It is in this spirit that I submit what I think about the agreement between Israel and the UAE in terms of the potential dangers to our nation; even when I know that the hand of HaShem is behind it all.

The agreement with the UAE joins with those previously signed with Egypt and Jordan, and soon possibly with Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and the Maghreb states. It is a breakthrough of historic proportions, reversing the obstinate refusal of all the Arab states to recognize the Jewish state in the midst of what they believe to be the Arab part of the world.



Map showing Israel (Blue) and UAE (Red). Image by Itzuvit.

The United Arab Emirates is situated in the Southeast part of the Arabian Peninsula (highlighted in red in the above image), bordering Oman and Saudi Arabia. In December 1971, the UAE became a federation of six emirates – Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm Al-Quwain, and Fujairah; the seventh emirate, Ras Al Khaimah, joined the federation in 1972. As hereditary ruler of Abu Dhabi, the richest emirate in the U.A.E. the king is one of the world's wealthiest monarchs, controlling 97.8 billion barrels of oil reserves, and he runs one of the largest sovereign wealth funds with reported assets of \$830 billion.

Is it good for Israel or bad – and if bad, how bad?

On the one hand the relationship could crumble, and friend could again become foe; but on the other hand, it could continue and develop. The greater danger to the Jewish state is from the potential success of the treaty.

We read on Shabbat in parashat Re'eh that HaShem will bless us

or curse us, as the text of the ceremony at Mount Gerizim and Mount Eival reads. However, life is never that clear cut – blessing or curse, there is a neutral gear between moving forward and backing up. That is a situation in which blessings and curse are interwoven, where the good has its heartbreaks and the bad its uplifting moments. This is the essence of the agreement with the UAE.

On the blessing side is the enormous wealth of the UAE, much of which will flow to the holy land. The rich will get richer and the poor will get children, as is the way of the world. The rich will build skyscrapers as the 100+ story one planned for Ramat Gan. Roads will be clogged with Porsches and Cadillacs and we will see many private jets and yachts. So, what’s so bad?

Parashat Va’yai’tzai records Ya’akov’s dream on the Temple Mount, when HaShem promised him overwhelming material and spiritual abundance:

וְאֵלֵינוּ יָבֵא וְיָרֵד וְיִשְׁכַּן בְּעַמְּנוּ וְנִשְׁכַּח מִלִּבָּנוּ
-הַבְּיָמָה הַזֹּאת וְנִשְׁכַּח מִלִּבָּנוּ ;וְנִשְׁכַּח מִלִּבָּנוּ וְנִשְׁכַּח
וְנִשְׁכַּח מִלִּבָּנוּ .וְנִשְׁכַּח מִלִּבָּנוּ ,וְנִשְׁכַּח מִלִּבָּנוּ
 ,וְנִשְׁכַּח מִלִּבָּנוּ-וְנִשְׁכַּח מִלִּבָּנוּ וְנִשְׁכַּח מִלִּבָּנוּ ,וְנִשְׁכַּח
 ,וְנִשְׁכַּח מִלִּבָּנוּ וְנִשְׁכַּח :וְנִשְׁכַּח מִלִּבָּנוּ-וְנִשְׁכַּח ,וְנִשְׁכַּח
 .וְנִשְׁכַּח מִלִּבָּנוּ-וְנִשְׁכַּח וְנִשְׁכַּח ,וְנִשְׁכַּח-וְנִשְׁכַּח וְנִשְׁכַּח

Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”

But Ya'akov's reaction is amazingly out of place, for he says to HaShem:

וַיִּשְׁבַּע יַעֲקֹב אֶת-אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל ,וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהֵי אָבוֹתַי
וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהֵי אָבוֹתַי אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֱלֹהֵי אָבוֹתַי ,וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהֵי
.אֱלֹהֵי אָבוֹתַי אֱלֹהֵי אָבוֹתַי ,וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהֵי אָבוֹתַי אֱלֹהֵי אָבוֹתַי ,וַיֹּאמֶר
,אֱלֹהֵי אָבוֹתַי אֱלֹהֵי אָבוֹתַי ;וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהֵי אָבוֹתַי ,וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהֵי אָבוֹתַי
אֱלֹהֵי אָבוֹתַי

Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father's house then HaShem will be my God

Ya'akov asks for bread and clothing, when he was promised great wealth; additionally, it would seem that he is making his devotion to HaShem conditional:

וַיֹּאמֶר-אֵל אֱלֹהֵי אָבוֹתַי

Then the Lord will be my God

But in fact, Ya'akov's reaction was visionary. He is saying to HaShem that if He will give all these things to the Jewish people, Ya'akov casts a doubt on his future generations ability to deal with great wealth. Therefore, he asks for only bread to eat and clothing to wear and by doing so Ya'akov knows that HaShem will always be in the hearts of his children.

A society of great wealth has little room for spirituality and less room for compassion. And with UAE wealth will come intermarriage, most often with Jewish women marrying Arab men from there.

With a peace agreement we will have to permit millions of Muslims into Yerushalayim to pray on the Temple Mount. On a regular Friday during Ramadan there are a hundred- and even two hundred-thousand Arabs on the mount; these numbers could double and triple. How will this impact on the Old City and on the country at large? But one can never anticipate from where the yeshuah (salvation) will come. This week the Mufti promulgated a "psak" that no one from the UAE may step foot on the Temple Mount.

There are two more points I wish to make:

1- Israel has from day one been orientated to the culture and countries of Aisav. We sought the big brother of the United States and Western Europe. This is now changing as the US falls ever deeper into the quagmire of decay and Europe is already almost at the bottom. HaShem is nudging us to distance ourselves from the Aisavs and come closer to Yishmael. The Arabs in our country are of mixed blood, being the biological result of the various nations who have crisscrossed the fertile crescent, but the Arabs of the Gulf states are of a "purer" genealogy.

2- The incentive for these Arab states to make agreements with Israel does not stem from "love of Mordechai" but from a legitimate fear of Iran.

This is a major revolution of historic proportions, as pointed out to me by my close friend Rabbi Avraham Isaacs. For 1300 hundred years since the advent of Islam by the pedophile, illiterate, murderer Mohamad, Jews in Arab countries were for the most part Dhimmis – third class citizens, downtrodden and semi-slaves.

Now Arab countries are seeking the protection of the Jewish state. HaShem is the greatest playwright – there is drama, comedy, pathos, mystery, love and suspense in all His scenes. The greatness of our generation is as if HaShem is saying, “Sit back. I’m now in the driver’s seat. So, relax and enjoy the ride.

Remember the three Bs

B careful **B** healthy **B** here and

JLMM Jewish Lives Matter More

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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