

Sukkot 5781

BS"D Parashat Sukkot 5781

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Torah – The Voice of Hashem

Pirkei Avot 5:1:

A horizontal row of 20 empty rectangular boxes, intended for children to write their names in, similar to a name tracing activity.

By ten divine utterances [ma'amarot] was the world created.

The expression “utterances/ma’amarot” implies that HaShem made His voice heard. How does HaShem’s voice sound?

The Prophet Eliyahu heard a “still, small voice” (I Melachim 19:11-12):

：「」

Come out,” HaShem called, “and stand on the mountain before the Lord.” And lo, the Lord passed by. There was a great and mighty wind, splitting mountains and shattering rocks by the power of the Lord. But the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind, an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake, fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire, a still, small voice.

Likewise, Rabbi Amnon wrote in his Unetane Tokef prayer:

...Then there is a blast on the great Shofar and a still, small voice is heard. The angels hasten to and fro and are seized with trembling and dread so that they say: “Behold! It is the day of judgment and the Host on high is to be considered in judgment,” for they have no merit in Your eyes in judgment.

By contrast, Moshe in the Mishkan and King David in Yerushalayim heard HaShem’s voice with an enormous intensity that sent shockwaves through the seven heavens, as King David wrote:

:בְּרֵבָבָה בְּרֵבָבָה בְּרֵבָבָה בְּרֵבָבָה

“The voice of HaShem is power! The voice of HaShem is majesty!” (Tehillim 29:4).

I submit: The magnitude of HaShem’s voice is perceived in accordance with the spiritual intensity of the respective place and situation.

Moshe and David heard HaShem's voice with enormous intensity due to the holy surroundings of the Mishkan and Yerushalayim. Eliyahu heard it as a still, small voice because such was the level of holiness of Mount Sinai after the Revelation. Rabbi Amnon, living outside the Land of Israel, likewise heard HaShem's voice as small and still.

Each year, in the month of Tishrei, the Jewish People completes a prolonged period of prayers, requests and entreaties, starting with the "Selichot" of Elul, continuing with the Days of Awe and the seven days of Succot and the eighth day of Shemini Atzeret.

Countless words uttered! Countless voices heard!

The prayers of the nation dwelling in Zion soar up to the Throne of Glory, in accordance with the location of the worshippers.

By contrast, for the Jewish communities in the exile the total of all their prayers amounts to a small still voice, because the source of the calls is the impurity of the galut lands. There is no prophecy outside the Land of Yisrael, because of the impurity of the galut. Only in the Holy Land can the Word of the Living God find expression.

An allegory for Succot

Reb Yisrael and his sons erected their sukkah adjacent to the kitchen door of their palatial home in one of the Five Towns, as they had done for many years in the past.

But this year was different. Reb Yisrael had just learned from his rabbi that one of the reasons for residing temporarily in a sukkah is in case one's destiny was decided on Rosh HaShana

to be expulsion into galut, the departure from the comforts of home into the sukkah could be considered to be that galut.

Reb Yisrael, his wife, and children left the warm comforts of their beautiful home and entered the sukkah with the knowledge that by taking up temporary residence therein, they would be absolved of any galut-related sins.

As the family continued to reside in the sukkah, they got so used to the pleasant smell of the schach (branches used to roof the sukkah) and the pretty pictures on the walls and the overhanging decorations, that they decided to remain there even after the chag! Even though they were able to peer into their permanent home with its luxurious amenities, electrical gadgets, and state-of-the-art under-floor heating units, thick hanging drapes, lush carpets and much more, they showed no interest in returning there.

As odd as it may seem, the family became accustomed to the crowded, cold interior of the sukkah. Their relatives and neighbors tried to point out the irrationality of what they were doing, but the very idea that this was galut did little to encourage the family to return home.

When their rabbi came to visit, it was surprising that he encouraged them to remain in the sukkah rather than to return home; because it was in the sukkah that the family felt comfortable and closely knit.

In the meantime, several strangers noticed that the previously brightly-lit home was vacant, and they decided to move in as if it was indeed their own!

Reb Yisrael and his wife and children saw the strangers living in the house; but in veneration for the sukkah, they stubbornly bonded with the thin walls and dried-out schach and refused to leave.

The whole thing was so absurd. To leave such a beautiful home

for the feeble, fallible construction of the sukkah, despite the fact that their beautiful home was beckoning them to return, was beyond the understanding of any rational person.

Then came the stones thrown by the local anti-Semites who wanted to rid the neighborhood of this sukkah eyesore. Reb Yisrael and his family dodged them one by one and steadfastly remained in their fragile dwelling, rationalizing these acts as irrelevant nuisances.

Then came the terrible night when one-third of the sukkah was torched by the local bullies. Reb Yisrael and his family were aware of what was happening, but their minds had become so warped that no amount of reasoning could move them. To them the sukkah was home and their home was galut.

Eventually the sukkah came crashing down, killing Reb Yisrael and his entire family – in their beloved galut!

Chag Samayach

Remember the three Bs B careful B healthy B here
and

JLMM – Jewish Lives Matter More

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

Copyright © 5781/2020 Nachman Kahana