

Tazria-Metzora 5773

BS"D Parashat Tazria-Metzora 5773

Our parasha begins with HaShem commanding Moshe to inform the Jewish nation that a woman who gives birth to a male is tam'ai'ah for 7 days and on the 8th day the baby is to be circumcised. The Torah continues with the halachic implications of the birth of a female.

And Rashi explains that the latter part of the previous parasha, Shemini, deals with halachot of the animal world, and our parasha begins with the halachot dealing with the birth of human beings, paralleling the order of creation, when the animal world preceded the creation of Adam and Chava.

It is interesting to note that our parasha does not open with a discussion of the human race as such, but only with a particular group of humans – the Jewish nation.

With Rashi's commentary in mind, the sequence should have been the animal world in parashat Shemini followed by universal laws binding all humanity, rather than parochial halachot of the Jewish people.

What does it mean?

Yesterday, in Eretz Yisrael we observed Yom HaShoah – Holocaust Day. It is a day consumed with the personal stories of suffering, the recalling of the bestiality of the Germans and their allies, the dehumanization of the Jewish nation, the gas, the fire, the ashes. It is a day when we remember the abject indifference and apathy to the plight of our people by the allies, who could have saved millions of Jews by opening the gates to Eretz Yisrael, or at least by bombing the rail tracks to the camps, which was not done even once in the long years of our suffering.

In here lies the answer to why parashat Tazria, which focuses on the highest rung of creation after dealing with animals and beasts, does not relate to humanity in general but only to the Jewish people.

Because what we call "humanity" is very much a part of the bestial, animal world.

I know that this is a difficult concept to accept, especially in view of the "righteous gentiles" (not many) who endangered their lives to save Jews, even in the cursed lands of Germany, Poland, etc., and other good people around the world who perform altruistic acts.

However, this is not my personal view, as it is explained by Chazal (Pesikta Rabati 43). When Yitzchak was weaned by his mother Sarah, the nobility of the area came to see the woman who at 99 years old had given birth to a child and had nursed him for two years. Sarah nursed many of these people's infants. The Pesikta concludes that God-fearing gentiles and converts to Judaism are the descendants of those who drank from the milk of our mother Sarah.

In a larger sense, the rabbis are telling us that the good in the world produced by gentiles is the result of those who were influenced in some way by the Jewish people.

How many millions of people have been murdered in the wars between the gentile nations? No animals build armies and attack other animals as we humans do to each other. The evil of mankind outweighs the good; and if not for the Jewish nation, there would be no justification for the world's existence.

If one might doubt the Pesikta's reliability as a source for making such a wide-sweeping assertion and condemnation of the human species, perhaps the Torah itself might be convincing.

HaShem the Creator states (Beraishiet 8,21):

every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood

The lesson we Jews, and certainly Medinat Yisrael, have to learn and implement is that there are only two entities in which we can trust – The God of Israel and ourselves.

If not for continuous Divine providence, deliverance and preservation from the time of Avraham until this very day, the Jewish people would have long ago been consumed and devoured by the gentiles who surrounded us.

We would never have returned to Eretz Yisrael nor could we have created such a magnificent Medina if not for the invisible hand of HaShem that surrounds us daily.

The Midrash (Beraishiet Raba, lech lecha 42) explains why our father Avraham is called (ibid. 13,14) Avram Ha'ivri based on the root "EVR" meaning the other side.

Because Avraham and his descendents, the Jewish people, were and will always be on "one side," while the rest of humanity is on the other.

Herein lies the dire necessity for "ahavat Yisrael" – love of your fellow Jew – for we are all brothers and sisters, fellow members of the Jewish family, race, nation and religion.

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

Copyright © 5773/2013 Nachman Kahana