

arms around his neck and kissed him.

Aisav, the hunter, exerted his maximum efforts in filling his lust for his brother Ya'akov's blood in the thousands of death camps spread over the length and breadth of Europe. And when Ya'akov was defeated, the Jewish people scarred and maimed counted our losses, with the confidence that HaShem would never permit another Shoah to befall His people. But we were wrong.

The Shoah of Aisav the archer lasted for 6 years and ceased with the allied victory in Europe. However, the Shoah of the smiling Aisav continues to this day, gaining momentum in the land of Aisav, the brother. It is the Shoah of assimilation through intermarriage by many, and the rejection of the Torah and our status as HaShem's chosen people by others.

The Second World War ended with the Jewish population of the United States numbering approximately 6 million Jews. Today, after 70 years, the number has dwindled to under 5 million with a 70% intermarriage rate. According to the normal rate of population increase, the Jews of the USA should be now in the 30 million range. So the Shoah of America, the smiling Aisav, has severed from our nation many more than the Shoah of Hitler.

The way to survival from both Shoahs is similar – to escape the goyim and return to Eretz Yisrael. Those who did so in the 1930s lived; the others perished. Today, those who do so will live to see their Jewish children and grandchildren. Those who remain in the galut will find it difficult to have a child who can say Kaddish over them.

The Wine of our Lives vs. the Matza of this Generation

Chag haPessach has passed. But despite any and all pre-holiday planning, every Jewish home will invariably have to contend with a handsome supply of residual matzot and wine, at least until Shevuot. This is obviously pre-planned from Heaven to teach us that the lessons of matzot and wine do not end with putting the Pessach dishes away.

The major lesson that emanates from the matza and wine began at the early dawn of civilization with the episode of Migdal Bavel – the Tower of Babel – in the book of Beraishiet (11,4-8):

וַיִּבְרְכוּ אֱלֹהֵי מִצְרָיִם אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיָמָיו אֵלֶּיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ ()
:וַיִּבְרְכוּ אֱלֹהֵי מִצְרָיִם אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיָמָיו אֵלֶּיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

:וַיִּבְרְכוּ אֱלֹהֵי מִצְרָיִם אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיָמָיו אֵלֶּיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ 'וּ בְּיָמָיו אֵלֶּיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ ()

וַיִּבְרְכוּ אֱלֹהֵי מִצְרָיִם אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיָמָיו אֵלֶּיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ ()
:וַיִּבְרְכוּ אֱלֹהֵי מִצְרָיִם אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיָמָיו אֵלֶּיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

:וַיִּבְרְכוּ אֱלֹהֵי מִצְרָיִם אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיָמָיו אֵלֶּיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ ()

:וַיִּבְרְכוּ אֱלֹהֵי מִצְרָיִם אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיָמָיו אֵלֶּיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ 'וּ בְּיָמָיו אֵלֶּיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ ()

⁴ Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; so we will not be scattered over the face of the whole earth."

⁵ And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower the people were building.

⁶ The Lord said, "They are one people speaking the same language which has initiated this, so nothing they plan will

be beyond their ability to perform.

⁷ Come, let us descend and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.”

⁸ And the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city.

The ubiquitous automobile can explain what happened there.

A car has an accelerator and brakes by which the driver controls the speed of the car's advance.

A society united in thought will also be united in deed and will advance very rapidly in the realization of its goals. On the other hand, dissent within society serves as the “brake” to reduce its advance in accordance with the intensity of the dissent.

The people of Babel, who comprised all of humanity at the time, had established a goal to reach heaven and make war on the Creator. This was the accelerator of society, driving it forcefully forward. HaShem decided to suppress and restrain their “ambitious” goal, but with less catastrophic means than the flood of Noach's time.

HaShem created the “brake” which would subdue and diminish their aggressive, forward-moving tendencies and eventually terminate their national goal by creating dissent caused by misunderstanding, “so they will not understand each other”.

The two major components of the seder are matza and wine. Wine by its very nature infuses one with robustness and often uncontrolled vigor. Matza is essentially the opposite. It is a “brake” produced by holding back the dough's natural instinct to expand.

The seder is teaching us a great theological-historic lesson.

HaShem vigorously began the process of Jewish physical and spiritual emancipation from human bondage to become HaShem's chosen nation. The ten plagues. The dividing of the sea and revelation at Mount Sinai. That is the wine.

However, for reasons known only to the Almighty, He applied the historical "brake" on the process to slow it down to a pace which would take another 4000 years to reach its climax. That is the matza.

We see these two energies at work in our time. Although there were always Jews who came to Eretz Yisrael, like the students of the Vilna Gaon and the Chassidic aliya, the rising wave of nationalism in Europe took hold within many of the Jewish people and created the Zionist movement. It was a vigorous idea.

Enthusiasm grew as the idea of a Jewish State began to permeate many segments of our nation. Enter the "brake" of pessimism, denial and constraint.

Not yet. Wait for the Mashiach. The Zionist movement is not observant. Only God who dispersed us into galut has the "right" to bring us home, etc.

In 1948, when the Medina was established, the hopes and prayers of 2000 years exploded into song and dance. A holiday was declared and Hallel was recited – it was the hand of God. Enter the forces of negation. No Hallel. No holiday. Just one more event in the family of Man. Stay put in the galut. Nothing of any spiritual consequence has occurred. And many who said Hallel in the first year did not do so in subsequent ones.

Enter the Six Day War. "Temple Mount is in our hands," declared General Motta Gur to his troops. Our joy could not be contained. For the first time in 2000 years, we became the sovereigns of Jerusalem.

The Kotel, Hallel, Jewish military heroes. Come the forces of constraint. It is forbidden to enter the Temple Mount. Leave the holiest place in the world in gentile hands. Don't build the city of Emanuel, because it will only anger the goyim. Army service is an affront to HaShem. No prayers for the Medina nor for the welfare of the soldiers. Don't bother to create a formidable military. HaShem will save us. Just learn Torah.

Those who press forward to annex Shomron and Yehuda, to build in the area of E1 connecting Maale Adumin with Yerushalayim, to throw away an idea of a state for the Arabs, to encourage people to ascend the Temple Mount, to destroy the thousands of Arab homes built illegally and to apply the death sentence to terrorists – these and more are the “wine” of our lives.

The negation of these advancements of Am Yisrael along our trek towards national rejuvenation is the “matza” of this generation.

Each point of view serves a purpose. Unrestrained vigor can be catastrophic and even suicidal; indolent, slothful restraint leads one to a life of desolation, blankness, destitution, exhaustion, hollowness, waste and depletion. They both have meaning when mutually challenging.

Each of these opposing forces in our national-religious life has the backing of Torah scholars. So, there are no tzadikim and resha'im here. On the contrary, this is HaShem's way of regulating the advance of Am Yisrael vis-a-vis the threatening gentile world.

However, I offer my thanks to HaShem for allowing me to be inclined towards the “wine” of our nation, having escaped the negativity of my teachers and rabbis who barely recognized that something had occurred to Am Yisrael in 1948.

In conclusion: At the seder, the matza invokes one bracha whereas the wine invokes five. The lesson is clear.

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

Copyright © 5775/2015 Nachman Kahana