

Tazria Metzora 5778

BS"D Parshiot Tazria Metzora 5778

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Stop blunting the dream and stifling enthusiasm

Contrary to wide agreement in the Social Sciences community that Man's behavior is formed and directed by his surroundings and upbringing, the Torah states **רעים הן דרכי לב** – the instincts in man's heart are evil from birth. Meaning: We are all commanded to control and direct our thoughts, intentions and actions in the way HaShem has set down in the Torah, however, everyone is born with tendencies that either abet or hinder in achieving this goal, which is nevertheless achievable.

To put it succinctly: We judge people only on their revealed physical and psychological information, whereas HaShem deals with our neshama level, the neshama that He placed in our physical entity, as we see from the Gemara Baytza 32n:

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Rav Natan ben Abba said in the name of Rav: The wealthy of the city of Bavel are destined to descend into Gehenom, as is apparent from the incident involving Shabtai son of Marinas when he resided in their city. He requested help from the well-to-do Jews to start him off in business, but they refused. They refused again when he requested charity to buy food. Shabtai then concluded correctly that the wealthy of Bavel who showed no compassion were descendants of the "Mixed Multitude" who Moshe had led out of Egypt. For one who acts with compassion is clearly a descendent of Avraham Aveinu, whereas one who is not compassionate is clearly not from the family of Avraham.

There are two major factors in the Pesach Seder – matza and wine, whose significance transcends the Seder Night.

It started long before the Egyptian exodus, at the Tower of Babel. We read in Bereishiet 11:4-8:

וַיִּבְנוּ אֵת הַבֵּיִר הַהוּא וְהַמִּגְדָּל הַהוּא וְהַעֵלָה הַמַּגָּדָל הַהוּא ()
:וְהַעֵלָה הַמַּגָּדָל הַהוּא וְהַעֵלָה הַמַּגָּדָל הַהוּא

:וְהַעֵלָה הַמַּגָּדָל הַהוּא וְהַעֵלָה הַמַּגָּדָל הַהוּא וְהַעֵלָה הַמַּגָּדָל הַהוּא ()

וְהַעֵלָה הַמַּגָּדָל הַהוּא וְהַעֵלָה הַמַּגָּדָל הַהוּא וְהַעֵלָה הַמַּגָּדָל הַהוּא ()
:וְהַעֵלָה הַמַּגָּדָל הַהוּא וְהַעֵלָה הַמַּגָּדָל הַהוּא

:וְהַעֵלָה הַמַּגָּדָל הַהוּא וְהַעֵלָה הַמַּגָּדָל הַהוּא וְהַעֵלָה הַמַּגָּדָל הַהוּא ()

:וְהַעֵלָה הַמַּגָּדָל הַהוּא וְהַעֵלָה הַמַּגָּדָל הַהוּא וְהַעֵלָה הַמַּגָּדָל הַהוּא ()

They said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top shall reach the sky. Let us make ourselves a name, so that we will not be scattered all over the face of the earth." HaShem descended to see the city and the tower that

the sons of man had built. HaShem said, "They are a single people, all having one language, and this is the first thing they do! Now nothing they plan to do will be unattainable for them! Come, let us descend and confuse their speech, so that one person will not understand another's." From that place, HaShem scattered them all over the face of the earth, and they stopped building the city".

Wine is the accelerator pedal, and the matza the brake. Mankind can be divided into two general groups: There are the "initiators" who are wired to overcome all obstacles (wine-accelerators), in contrast to those who escape making decisions (matza), they are conservative and fearful of the unknown, suppressing all feelings of exhilaration and enthusiasm – the brakes of society.

In Biblical Babel, the entire population was actively like-minded, which energized them to achieve their shared goals. HaShem prevented their initiative, not by taking lives as He had in the time of Noah, but by applying an internal brake mechanism. Differences of opinion were introduced into society which cooled their enthusiasm and led to the project's cancellation, as it says, "One person will not understand another's speech" (ibid., v. 7).

Initially, wine energizes the drinker even to the point of embarrassment, whereas matza represents the forces of resistance to change. Wine and matza on Pesach night indicate that HaShem began the process of redemption with great vigor but applied the "historic brakes" to retard the process.

In our days, the "start" and "stop" mechanisms are at work in our nation. With the rise of European, nineteenth century nationalism broad sectors of our people in the galut began considering our return home to establish a Jewish State. Various braking mechanisms emerged which are active until this day, blunting the dream and stifling enthusiasm.

Eventually, the State of Israel was established amidst great joy. Hallel was recited with a bracha, praising HaShem for the miracles He performed for us. Then those braking mechanisms set in. They argued that no significant change had taken place in Jewish history, and that there was certainly no place for reciting Hallel. And that the army is unnecessary because our prayers are sufficient to keep the enemy at bay. And that the Medina is not even the beginning of the redemption process, just another political episode in our history. Don't discuss the Shoah where 6 million died because it was brought about by HaShem, whereas "the Medina was brought about by the Satan," was once said to me by a Satmar Chassid.

At the end of the Six Day War, the Land of Israel extended from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River, including first and foremost our Temple Mount at Jerusalem. Once more the forces of detraction were aroused. Employing shallow reasoning devoid of a halachic basis they declared it forbidden to go up to the Temple Mount. They said Tachanun should be recited on Israel Independence Day, opposing the recitation of Hallel praising HaShem for His miracles that are with us at every moment. They further opposed prayers for the State of Israel or for the IDF and the other security forces.

These are the very characteristics of the wine and matza that stride hand in hand to this very day. History will prove that those trying to resist the redemption had made an egregious mistake, for these are the times of wine, not matza.

Shabbat Shalom,

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