Tazria-Metzorah and Yom Ha’atzma’ut 5781

BS”D Parashiot Tazria-Metzorah and Yom Ha’atzma’ut 5781
Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Living Al Kiddush HaShem

The holy Torah records many blessings of HaShem for His chosen people such as:

Bereishiet 13:16

ושמתי את זרעך כעפר הארץ אשר אם יוכל איש למנות את עפר הארץ גם זרעך ימנה

> *I will increase your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted.*

Ibid: 15:18-21

יום ההוא כרת ה ’ את אברם ברית לאמר לזרעך נתתי את הארץ הזאת מנהר
מצרים עד הנהר הגדל נהר פרת : את הקיני ואת הקנזי ואת הקדמני : ואת
החתי ואת הפרזי ואת הרפאים : ואת האמרי ואת הכנעני ואת הגרגשי ואת
היבוסי

> *On that day the LORD made a covenant with Avram and said, “To your descendants I gave this land, from the river of Egypt (Nile) to the great river, the Euphrates; the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites; Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites; Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and*

Jebusites.”

Ibid: 22:17

כי ברך אברכך והרבה ארבה את זרעך ככוכבי השמים וכחול אשר על שפת ‘
הים וירש זרעך את שער איביו

I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies,”

Shemot 19:6

שמות יט, ו : ואתם תהיו לי ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש אלה הדברים אשר
תדבר אל בני ישראל

You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.”

These, and more, are breathtaking blessings and promises from the ultimate source of blessings – the Creator himself; however there looms a dark cloud over all these blessings – not one has ever come to fruition. For we were never the ultimate righteous nation that HaShem had designated for us:

1) On the fortieth day after receiving the Torah, many of the newly chosen nation worshipped the Golden Calf.

2) Six hundred thousand men died in the desert experience for refusing to enter the Holy Land.

3) When Yehoshua Bin Nun finally conquered and divided the land among the tribes, idolatry raised its ugly head and became part of our national religious life for more than 800 years, until the destruction of the First Temple.

4) The history of the lamentable Second Temple period records periods of civil war, Hellenism, internecine bloodshed, subjugation, and destruction of the Second Temple and exile.

So, the blessing, *“You shall be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation* (as apart from certain individuals)” was never fulfilled.

The verses referring to the geographical expanse of the Holy Land, where we were promised to be sovereign, never was actualized in our long history.

The obvious conclusion is that the promises and blessings of HaShem were not meant to be realized at the time of their being said, but rather in the distant future.

We shall return to this.

Parashat Tazria begins (Vayikra 13:1):

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר: אָדָם כִּי יִהְיֶה בְעוֹר בְּשָׂרוֹ שְׂאֵת אוֹ סַפַּחַת אוֹ בַהֶרֶת וְהָיָה בְעוֹר בְּשָׂרוֹ לְנֶגַע צָרָעַת וְהוּבָא אֶל אַהֲרֹן הַכ�ֹּהֵן אוֹ אֶל אַחַד מִבָּנָיו הַכֹּהֲנִים

And HaShem said to Moses and Aaron, “One who has a swelling or a rash or a shiny spot on their skin that may be a defiling disease must be brought to Aaron the Kohen or to one of his Kohanic sons.

Rabbi Yochanan (tractate Arachin 16a) states that there are 7 sins that cause tzara’at:

,לָשׁוֹן הָרַע שְׁפִיכוּת דָּמִים ,שְׁבוּעַת שָׁוְא ,גִּלּוּי עֲרָיוֹת ,גִּלּוּי עֲרָיוֹת ,גְּנֵבָה וְכִילְדְּבָרֵינוּ ,וְכִילְדְּבָרֵינוּ ,וְכִילְדְּבָרֵינוּ.

Lashon hara (malicious gossip), shedding of blood (murder or homicide), false oaths, incestuous behavior, vulgarious behavior, theft, and being a miser or hoarder.

Interestingly missing from Rabbis Yochanan’s list are ritualistic sins such as desecration of Shabbat and Festivals, partaking of non-kosher food, inappropriate conduct in the realm of tuma and tahara. In fact, the common denominator between all the sinful acts enumerated by Rabbi Yochanan is

that they are all anti-social behaviors.

And the result is obtrusive, appalling, and repelling skin blemishes, with the subsequent banishment from society when the transgressor must leave his home and even his city to live in solitude. He transgressed against society and he is banished from society.

On the above-quoted verses regarding tzara'at –

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר. אָדָם כִּי יִהְיֶה בְעוֹר בְּשָׂרוֹ שְׂאֵת אוֹ סַפַּחַת אוֹ בַהֶרֶת וְהָיָה בְעוֹר בְּשָׂרוֹ לְנֶגַע צָרָעַת וְהוּבָא אֶל אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן אוֹ אֶל אַחַד מִבָּנָיו הַכֹּהֲנִים.

And HaShem said to Moses and Aaron: "One who has a swelling or a rash or a shiny spot on their skin that may be a defiling disease must be brought to Aaron the Kohen or to one of his Kohanic sons –

The Midrash (Vayikra 15:9) states:

שְׂאֵת …שְׂאֵת זוֹ בָּבֶל …זוֹ מָדַי …זוֹ יָוָן …זוֹ רוֹמִי בָּבֶל שֶׁחָרְבָה בֵּית רִאשׁוֹן מָדַי שֶׁעָתִידָה לַחֲרֹב בֵּית שֵׁנִי יָוָן שֶׁחָרְבָה בֵּית שֵׁנִי וְנֶגַע צָרָעַת רוֹמִי שֶׁעָתִידָה לַחֲרֹב בֵּית שֵׁנִי וְעַכְשָׁיו שֶׁחָרְבָה בֵּית שֵׁנִי הַמְצֹרָע בָּא אֶל הַכֹּהֵן וְהַכֹּהֵן מְטַמֵּא אוֹתוֹ הָא אָמַר הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא אֲנִי הוּא שֶׁעָתִיד לְטַהֵר אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וְזָרַקְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם מַיִם טְהוֹרִים וְטָהַרְתֶּם מִכֹּל טֻמְאוֹתֵיכֶם וּמִכֹּל גִּלּוּלֵיכֶם.

Se'ait refers to Babylon (destroyers of the first Temple), sapachat refers to Mede (where Achashverosh and Haman planned to destroy the Jewish people), baheret refers to Greece, and negeh tzara'at refers to Rome (destroyers of the Second Temple). In this period of time one who is afflicted with tzara'at must turn to a kohen, but HaShem has said that in the future He will be the purifier of Yisrael, as is stated (by the prophet Yechezkel 36): "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols".

From this Midrash we learn that when the Jewish people stray

from the holy Torah, HaShem – the ultimate Kohen – relates to us as a kohen would relate to a metzorah. And just as a metzorah suffers from skin blemishes, HaShem sent upon our ancestors who sinned the pit bulls of history – Nevuchadnezzer, Achashverosh and Haman, Antiochus, and the Caesars of Rome, and in modern times the czars of Russia, Hitler, Stalin, and the proteges of Muhammad.

We also learn from this Midrash that in future times – our days – many of the Jewish nation will be guilty of anti-social behavior to such an extent that it will be beyond the capacity of a kohen to help the sinners, and HaShem Himself will have to take matters into His own hands, as the Midrash ends with a quote from the prophet Yechezkel: “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols”.

In the golden style of Chazal, (our rabbis) whose custom it was to refrain from castigating the Jewish nation in public with specific accusations, the Midrash alludes to our future disparagingly spiritual state by quoting the verse from Yechezkel chapter 36, from whence we can understand wherein lies our social-religious inadequacies.

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

> *17 “Son of man, when the people of Israel were living in their own land, they defiled it by their conduct and their actions…*
>
> *18 So I poured out my wrath on them because they had shed blood in the land and because they had defiled it with their idols.*
>
> *19 I dispersed them among the nations, and they were scattered through the countries; I judged them according to their conduct and their actions.*
>
> *20 And wherever they went among the nations they profaned my holy name, for it was said of them, ‘These are the LORD’s people, and yet they had to leave his land.*
>
> *21 I had concern for My holy name, which the people of Israel profaned among the nations where they had gone.*

Verse 20 describes the great chilul HaShem in the future which by necessity will provoke the major nations of the world to be for us as metzorah blemishes, as were Babylon, Medes, Greece, and Rome in the past.

The desecration of HaShem’s holy name will be the ongoing willingness of Jews to remain in the galut, as the prophet says, “And wherever they went among the nations they profaned my holy name, for it was said of them, ‘These are the LORD’s people, and yet they had to leave His land.”

The very presence of a Jew in the galut, when the gates of the Holy Land are open for all Jews to come, is the chilul HaShem. The assimilated Jew in San Francisco, who looks, thinks, and behaves like a goy, is not the ticking time bomb of Jewish life in the galut, it is the one whose outside appearance screams “Jew”. The religious communities and every individual in them are guilty of national tzara’at that Rabbi Yochanan

referred to.

1) Lashon hara, because their very presence in the galut is a statement that HaShem did not give us Eretz Yisrael. Because if He did give us the Holy Land what are religious Jews doing in Crown Heights or in Teaneck?

2) The presence of Jews in the galut is an invitation for the anti-Jews to physically harm the Jew – here you have "shedding of blood".

3) Every mention of Eretz Yisrael, Yerushalayim and Zion in the davening (prayers) is tantamount to a false oath.

4) Incestuous behavior, because those lands were given to the nations of the world and we have no justification to be there.

5) Vulgar behavior when we become part of the gentile cultures, feeling as one of them and demanding equal rights.

6 & 7) Theft and being a miser or hoarding, when Jews dedicate their inherent genius for the good of others and not for the Jewish people.

And the prophet continues:

> *22 "Therefore, say to the Israelites, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: It is not for your sake, people of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone.*
>
> *23 I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD, when I am proved holy through you before their eyes.*
>
> *24 'For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather*

you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land.

25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols.

26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

27 And I will put My Spirit in you and move you to follow My decrees and be careful to keep My laws.

28 Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be My people, and I will be your God.

Here HaShem promises to restore the Jewish people in galut to Eretz Yisrael, not because they will do teshuva and want to come back, but for the sake of HaShem's holy name.

And the prophet continues:

29 I will save you from all your uncleanness. I will call for the grain and make it plentiful and will not bring famine upon you.

30 I will increase the fruit of the trees and the crops of the field, so that you will no longer suffer disgrace among the nations because of famine.

31 Then you will remember your evil ways and wicked deeds, and you will loathe yourselves for your sins and detestable practices.

32 I want you to know that I am not doing this for your sake, declares the Sovereign LORD. Be ashamed and disgraced

for your conduct, people of Israel!

33 “‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: On the day I cleanse you from all your sins, I will resettle your towns, and the ruins will be rebuilt.

34 The desolate land will be cultivated instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass through it.

35 they will say, “This land that was laid waste has become like the garden of Eden; the cities that were lying in ruins, desolate and destroyed, are now fortified and inhabited.”

36 Then the nations around you that remain will know that I the LORD have rebuilt what was destroyed and have replanted what was desolate. I the LORD have spoken, and I will do it.’

37 “This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Once again I will yield to Israel’s plea and do this for them: I will make their people as numerous as sheep,

38 as numerous as the flocks for offerings at Jerusalem during her appointed festivals. So will the ruined cities be filled with flocks of people. Then they will know that I am the LORD.”

How fortunate we are to live in Medinat Yisrael even though it spans only a fraction of Eretz Yisrael.

We have erased from our bodies and souls the tzara’at of the galut. As we develop every day in the Holy Land, we are a source of Kiddush HaShem (sanctification of the Holy Name). May we merit to witness shortly the final redemption and the fulfillment of all HaShem’s promises for His chosen people.

Order of the day – BE HERE and Remember JLMM – Jewish lives

matter most

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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