

Teruma 5776

BS"D Parashat Teruma 5776

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Solve the Equation of Time + Space

The immune system protects the body from disease and infection. There exists a little-understood phenomena known as 'autoimmune disease', where suddenly the immune system attacks the body's healthy cells.

Can such a phenomena exist in the spiritual world, where the Torah and mitzvot are our immune system to strengthen our yetzer tov and protect us from the 'yetzer hara'? Can otherwise seemingly healthy, observant Jews, and even spiritual leaders, use the Torah to attack itself?

Running through our parasha is an unseen undertow of meaning within the physical structure of the mishkan (Tabernacle) and its functions in the desert encampment.

The physical universe that Hashem created to be the womb within which our world develops, consists of two dimensions: time and space – there is nothing else. Humans cannot create time or space beyond that which exists at any moment.

The Ohel Moed at the center of the Mishkan complex was a rectangular tent formed by 53 amudim (poles), each ten amot high (approx. 5 meters) covered over with a series of fabric and skins. Twenty vertical, connected poles to the north, another 20 to the south, 8 to the west and 5 at the entrance at the east. The total interior measurements were 30 amot

long, 10 amot wide and 10 amot high.

Each pole had an identification mark to insure that when reassembled after each move, the order of the poles would be maintained. For example: northern pole identified as 15 was always placed between the northern poles identified as 14 and 16.

During the travel intervals between encampments, the entire complex was disassembled and later reassembled at the following encampment. This was Hashem's command. The Halachic space was consistent and immutable, with no human options available.

The time period at and between every encampment was dependent on the condition of the cloud which hovered above the Mishkan. When the cloud began to move, it was a sign to the nation to fold their tents and pack their belongings; and for the Kohanim and Levi'im to cover the holy implements and disassemble the entire Mishkan complex. There were encampments that extended for days or weeks, and some which lasted only several hours. The people had no inkling of how long they would be at any particular camp.

Hashem created this situation in order to teach His nation that time and space are His and are totally under His control.

The term Avoda Zara does not refer exclusively to nature or idol worship. It is a generic term for all beliefs that run counter to the will of Hashem.

One can be an observant Halachic Jew, yet be guilty of the most severe Avoda Zara, if he or she functions or adopts ideals and ideologies that clash with the will of Hashem.

How can we know today in a world of changing values and cultural mores what is the will of Hashem when the answer does not appear in the text of the Shulchan Aruch?

I believe that Hashem exhibits His will through time and space as they appear in the events of every generation.

The first of the Ten Commandments states:

I am the Lord your God who has taken you out of the land of Egypt.

Hashem is the master of time, timing and space. He decreed that the Jews would be in Egypt for 210 years. At the end of that precise time he freed us from bondage and made us leave the space that was called Egypt.

We wandered in the desert for 40 years, paralleling the 40 days spent by the meraglim (scouts) in the land. Again time and space.

People live and die according to the time that was allotted to them at birth, and will die only in the place that upon his birth was dictated for him to die. Time and space.

The first Bet HaMikdash was destroyed after 410 years, and the Babylonian exile was destined by Hashem to last for 70 years.

There are endless examples of time and space working in unison.

A wise and sensitive rabbinic leader should be able to feel the direction of the winds of history, and must adjust and coordinate his leadership manifestos according to its flow. To fight Hashem's dictates in a changing world is tantamount to Avoda Zara. To use the Torah as a tool to refute Hashem's initiatives is the Jewish version of autoimmune disease.

Unfortunately, there are spiritual leaders who act as autoimmune destroyers of Hashem's great love for Am YIsrael as Hashem weaves our way through the pitfalls of the galut and 2000 years of exile.

It is the task of gedolai Torah to solve the equation of time

+ space = the proper Halachic response to Hashem's initiatives.

When rabbis are at odds with each other regarding the proper response to the time-space equation; or when they are afraid to take a stand because of the enormous implications of any response, Hashem chooses an unknown tzadik to point out the way for the nation. This is the history of the Shoftim (Judges) period, when the Sanhedrin and elders were silent and individuals who were not always spiritual giants were chosen to lead.

On the 9th of Av in the year 70 C.E. a gezaira (decree) emanated from Hashem that the Bet HaMikdash would be destroyed and our place for the next two millennia would be in galut-exile.

Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai and the Sanhedrin in Yavne, understood the time-space equation for the future of the nation. They produced temporary substitutes for the Temple service and the holy city of Yerushalayim intended to keep the Jewish nation united until our return home, at some unknown to them future time.

They succeeded magnificently.

On the 5th of Iyar 5708 (1948 of the C.E.), the decree of our suffering, wandering and abandonment was rescinded, and the time-space equation now equaled the demise of the galut and the beginning of the final redemption of Am Yisrael in Hashem's Holy Land.

Many holy rabbis and roshei yeshiva understand the balance side of the time-space equation and encourage the Jews to leave the galut. However, there are others who do not merit the heavenly inspirations to understand that what was, is no more, and that we have entered into a new era where the galut is dying and Jewish life is being resurrected in Eretz Yisrael.

The gifted leaders encourage the best (not the weakest) of their students to share their lives by learning Torah and defending the nation as soldiers of Tzahal and building this great nation in preparation for the awesome miracles in our future.

However, there are spiritual leaders who act as an autoimmune disease within the nation by using the Torah to destroy the Torah and the fabric of Jewish unity and our return to Eretz Yisrael. Their false interpretation of Torah verses and Talmudic ideas, and the use of their material wealth to control the consciences of otherwise God-fearing people, are indeed a disease that must be eradicated or sidelined for the sake of our nation's future.

Who is truthful and who is deceitful?

Our parasha begins:

וַתִּקַּח מִיָּדֵינוּ אֶת-הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאֶת-הַמְּלָכִים וְאֶת-הַמַּלְאָכִים וְאֶת-הַכֹּהֲנִים וְאֶת-הַלְוִיִּם וְאֶת-הַיִּשְׂרָאֵלִים וְאֶת-הַיִּתְּיָמִים וְאֶת-הַיְתוּמִּים וְאֶת-הַיְבָרִים וְאֶת-הַיְחָרְשֵׁים וְאֶת-הַיְחָרְשֵׁי-הַלָּבַיִם וְאֶת-הַיְחָרְשֵׁי-הַלְּבָבוֹת וְאֶת-הַיְחָרְשֵׁי-הַלְּבָבוֹת וְאֶת-הַיְחָרְשֵׁי-הַלְּבָבוֹת .’

And these are the voluntary donations you shall receive from them: gold, silver and bronze; blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen; goat hair, etc.

Hashem commanded Moshe to initiate the first of many “united Jewish appeals” with voluntary donations earmarked for the construction of the mishkan and its accompanying implements.

Voluntary contributions, not coercive taxation. For it is a universal premise that the Torah way of life can survive and thrive only within an atmosphere of sincerity and truth which shines from altruistic acts of mitzvot.

It is difficult to discern who among us is truthful and who is deceitful. The Gemara (Ta'anit 11a) stresses that difficulty when stating that in the next world of absolute truth, those who bear witness to one's conduct and sincerity are none other than the bricks and the walls of one's private home!

I suggest a test of sincerity of our yeshiva population in the Torah world here in Eretz Yisrael; a test which in itself contains many positive elements.

Replace the present system of military conscription with the method currently practiced in the U.S. and other countries, where military service is voluntary, but offers a livable salary with opportunities to integrate into the work force at the end of the service.

This is the scenario which keeps Chareidi roshei yeshiva awake at night, because of its nightmarish implications.

If this would happen, today's large number of yeshiva and kollel students would embarrassingly dwindle. In conservative terms, I believe that the Chassidic and Sephardic yeshivot would lose 90% of their students and the "Lithuanian" yeshiva enrollment would decrease by 75%. The Religious-Zionist yeshivot would remain unaffected.

In a very short time, it would introduce tens of thousands of young men into the work force, which could not integrate them all. The result would be that, paradoxically, many would enlist in Tzahal because of the generous salaries. It would also reduce the number of women serving in Tzahal, which in itself would be an important step for tzni'ut.

But the yeshiva world need not worry because unfortunately military conscription will be with us until, and even after, the Mashiach arrives.

What I am, in fact, saying is that the yeshiva world must stop criticizing and belittling Medinat Yisrael. Their rabbis and

students must acknowledge that their entire existence is dependent on the secular “fargoy’ishte” Medina which is more sincere and serious than most of the students who are afforded the Medina’s benefits without requiring them to shoulder any responsibilities.

Acknowledgement of this in the form of tefila on Shabbat for the Medina would be a worthy expression of hakarat hatov.

Shabbat Shalom,

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