

Tetzaveh 5774

BS"D Parashat Tetzaveh 5774

Facing Each Other

The cover of the Aron (holy ark) was a sheet of gold one tefach thick (app. 8 centimeters) on top of which were two Keruvim (cherubim). The Gemara (Bava Batra 99a) reconciles a contradiction between the pasuk in Teruma which states that the Keruvim faced each other, whereas the pasuk in Divrei Hayamim (Chronicles 2, 3:13) states that they faced away from each other. The Gemara explains:

וְכַרְוִיִּם וְכַרְוִיִּם וְכַרְוִיִּם וְכַרְוִיִּם , וְכַרְוִיִּם וְכַרְוִיִּם וְכַרְוִיִּם וְכַרְוִיִּם
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When the Jewish people acted in accordance with the will of HaShem the Keruvim faced each other; but when the Jews did not do so, than the Keruvim faced away from each other.

The converse is also true: When Jews face each other in love then they are acting in accordance with the will of Hashem; when we are detached from one another we are acting in defiance of HaShem's will.

One Mishpacha?

Pirkei Avot (chapter 2):

"Be aware of three things and you will not sin. Know what is above you: An Eye that always sees you, an ear that always hears you and that all your actions are inscribed in a book".

"Book" here could mean: 1- the soul of each individual, 2- the Torah, 3- the Book of Life which is opened on Rosh HaShana, 4-

the “guest” book when entering the next world, 5- all of the above.

Moshe Rabbeinu in his defense of Am Yisrael before the wrath of HaShem that threatened to destroy the worshippers of the Golden Calf and perhaps the entire nation, prostrated himself before the Almighty and said (Shemot 32:32):

וְעַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֵלֵינוּ וְעַתָּה אֵלֵינוּ וְעַתָּה אֵלֵינוּ וְעַתָּה אֵלֵינוּ וְעַתָּה אֵלֵינוּ

*And now if You will carry their sin (be patient and not destroy the people); but if not, then please erase me from the **book** that You have written.*

“Erase me from the book” – eradicate my feeling of self; my feeling of being an entity apart from all others; my humanity – as if I was never a part of the reality of Your world. Total extinction.

There are situations where a Jew distances himself so far from his commitment to the urgent needs and demands of Am Yisrael at a particular time in history, as if declaring to HaShem: “Erase me from the **book** that You have written”.

A letter appeared in the “Mishpacha” magazine in which the writer explains why she opted to live in Lakewood and not in the land of Israel. She concludes: “As long as Eretz Yisrael remains mostly a secular country I cannot move there. It just **hurts** too much. I will just wait for Mashiach – hopefully, not too long”.

I would ordinarily not relate to this kind of letter, however I will do so for two reasons:

1- There is an unconventional “chidush” to her approach. Our rabbis have taught that women, more than men, have an inborn love of Eretz Yisrael. That is why not one woman sided with the Biblical meraglim (spies) when they spoke badly of the land.

Among other irrational positions taken by certain contemporary religious groups, we find that even their women do not feel the intrinsic love of the land of their righteous mothers.

2- The ideas expressed by this righteous Jewish woman are unfortunately rampant among certain circles of "bnei Torah" in the galut. I would like to tell her, and all who think like her, what "hurt" for Eretz Yisrael really means.

The pain of a soldier – dati (religiously observant) and not so dati – who has lost a leg in defense of our right to live in Eretz Yisrael and the pain suffered by the parents of a soldier killed in battle or taken prisoner while defending our country, is a bit more than the "hurt" of that righteous Jewish Lakewood woman who was upset because she saw a car running on Shabbat.

The holy people of this land – both dati and not so dati – are living the words of our prophets that HaShem will restore us to this land; and they are more "Jewish" than the most observant person in Lakewood, New Jersey. They are the students of Yehoshua Bin Nun who liberated the Holy land.

Thousands of rabbis and teachers labor in every corner of Eretz Yisrael in order to disseminate Torah among people who unfortunately did not have the privilege of a Torah education. Their physical and financial sacrifices are succeeding, as attested to by the many batai kneset and yeshivot in places where 20 years ago one would never have dreamed that Torah would exist.

The hurt borne by the holy people of Eretz Yisrael – dati and not so dati – in our struggle to renew Torah life here far exceeds the "hurt" that our righteous Jewish woman suffered over the driving of a car on Shabbat in Tel Aviv, which led her to avoid such future pain by remaining in the pure *Gan Eden* galut of Lakewood.

The righteous Jewish woman's letter appeared in the magazine

Mishpacha; but are we really one mishpacha (family)?

What is Moshe most famous for?

On the question: What is Moshe most famous for? The consensus would probably be that He was HaShem's agent in bringing and teaching the Torah to Am Yisrael.

That would be correct had the question been: For what is Moshe **Rabbeinu** (our rabbi) most famous?

However, the question is: what is the **man** Moshe most famous for? What did he do to represent the values and integrity of the son of Amram and Yocheved not the "eved HaShem" (the servant of God) who had no choice but to do the bidding of the Creator?

Moshe the man was a defender of the downtrodden, a redeemer of those who had lost all hope, a savior of those who were desperate.

Moshe saved the Jew who was being beaten by the Egyptian task master. He saved the daughters of Yitro from a terrible fate.

When the midat hadin (the quality of harsh justice) triumphed and nearly brought about the demise of Am Yisrael for our sins in the matter of the Golden Calf, it was the **man** Moshe who initiated 80 days of prayer to save the nation. When Moshe learned of HaShem's intention to destroy the people for accepting the meraglim's instructions not to enter the Land, he succeeded in suppressing the evil decree. At the rebellion of Korach, Moshe instructed Aharon how to halt the deadly plague.

The **man** Moshe knew the value of life. For if there would not be a Jewish nation, the world and all in it would have no justification to exist.

Moshe's love for the Jewish nation knew no bounds. The Torah relates (Devarim 9:13-14) that as a consequence of the Golden Calf, HaShem's ire was aroused and Moshe relates:

:וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל מֹשֶׁה וְעַתָּה עֲזַבְתָּ אֶתְּךָ אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתָּ וְעַתָּה אֶתְּיָדְךָ מִן־הָעָם הַזֶּה וְעַתָּה אֶתְּיָדְךָ מִן־הָאֱלֹהִים וְעַתָּה אֶתְּיָדְךָ מִן־הָאֲרָצוֹת וְעַתָּה אֶתְּיָדְךָ מִן־הָאֲנָשִׁים וְעַתָּה אֶתְּיָדְךָ מִן־הָאֲנָשִׁים וְעַתָּה אֶתְּיָדְךָ מִן־הָאֲנָשִׁים

וְעַתָּה אֶתְּיָדְךָ מִן־הָאֲנָשִׁים וְעַתָּה אֶתְּיָדְךָ מִן־הָאֲנָשִׁים וְעַתָּה אֶתְּיָדְךָ מִן־הָאֲנָשִׁים וְעַתָּה אֶתְּיָדְךָ מִן־הָאֲנָשִׁים וְעַתָּה אֶתְּיָדְךָ מִן־הָאֲנָשִׁים וְעַתָּה אֶתְּיָדְךָ מִן־הָאֲנָשִׁים וְעַתָּה אֶתְּיָדְךָ מִן־הָאֲנָשִׁים וְעַתָּה אֶתְּיָדְךָ מִן־הָאֲנָשִׁים

And the Lord said to me, "I have seen this people, and they are a stiff-necked people indeed! Cease your beseeching, so that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven. And I will make you into a nation stronger and more numerous than they."

To HaShem's commitment that after the Jewish nation would no longer exist, then Moshe would become the progenitor of a new Jewish nation, Moshe replied (Shemot 32:32):

וְעַתָּה אֶתְּיָדְךָ מִן־הָאֲנָשִׁים וְעַתָּה אֶתְּיָדְךָ מִן־הָאֲנָשִׁים וְעַתָּה אֶתְּיָדְךָ מִן־הָאֲנָשִׁים וְעַתָּה אֶתְּיָדְךָ מִן־הָאֲנָשִׁים וְעַתָּה אֶתְּיָדְךָ מִן־הָאֲנָשִׁים וְעַתָּה אֶתְּיָדְךָ מִן־הָאֲנָשִׁים וְעַתָּה אֶתְּיָדְךָ מִן־הָאֲנָשִׁים וְעַתָּה אֶתְּיָדְךָ מִן־הָאֲנָשִׁים

And if You do not accept my supplications to forgive their sin, then erase my name from Your book (Torah) that You wrote.

HaShem annulled His decree to destroy the nation, but acted upon Moshe's words to erase his name from the Torah by not having the name Moshe appear in our parashat Tetzaveh.

Moshe's persistence that the Jewish nation, as is, must continue to exist is curious (to say the least) in light of HaShem's promise that Judaism would continue through Moshe's offspring.

However, history has vindicated Moshe's tenacity, which he derived from the slavery experience, although neither Moshe nor his children were enslaved. The slavery experience infused the Jewish people with the three qualities which are requisite

for the Jewish nation to fulfill its unique role as God's chosen people.

1- The enduring, deep-rooted, immutable, resolute, unalterable and unwavering knowledge that the Creator has chosen the Jewish nation from all others.

2- To have experienced the suffering that evil men are willing and capable of causing their fellow human beings.

3- The desire for justice and righteousness so necessary for the eventual tikun olam – redemption of mankind after their expulsion from Gan Eden, as related in the Torah.

Indeed, Jewish history has vindicated Moshe's tenacity. We are the only nation which has survived all the evils that man can do to his fellow man, and succeeded in returning to our Promised Land. And it is from here, Medinat Yisrael, that the Jewish nation will eradicate the evil which has been the fate of mankind to this day.

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

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