

Toldot 5773

BS"D Parashat Toldot 5773

Part A:

Our parasha relates (26:2-5):

² *The Lord appeared to Isaac and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live.*

³ *Stay in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will uphold the oath I swore to your father Abraham.*

⁴ *I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed,*

⁵ *because Abraham obeyed me and did all I required of him, keeping my commands, my decrees and my instructions.*

Part B:

A highly-respected rabbi whose congregation is in an area that was hard hit by Sandy sent the following message to his congregants. I will quote the major portions of his message.

Dear Friends,

As we begin our new week almost two weeks since Sandy paid us an unwelcome visit, I can see a crack of light in the tunnel of murky deluge that enveloped us. More homes have had power restored, gasoline has begin to flow in more liberal quantities, the weather has gotten warmer, and we are now slowly entering the rebuilding phase. There are still many

communal and individual problems to be resolved; but with time, they will be resolved. Yes, the tide is turning (please excuse the metaphor). A major factor in the positive turn of events has been the communal leadership of the local Shuls, the local JCCs, Achiezer, the help of other volunteer agencies, the help of some local politicians, and the incredible work of dedicated individuals who have tirelessly devoted themselves to the afflicted communities, families, and individuals. This leads me to a simple point—the power of communal responsibility. We are so fortunate to be a part of a great community that services its members through good times and challenging times.

This past Shabbos we read that Avraham was blessed in his old age 'bakol', which translates to "everything". The commentaries debate what 'bakol' means in a deeper sense... I would like to suggest that 'bakol', everything, describes a state of mind that Avraham was blessed with in life. He was always happy with his lot. He always felt that he had 'kol' everything. I think that that is exactly the way we should think. We have everything! We are alive, we survived Sandy, no one was seriously hurt in our community, we have our families, our friends, and we live in a great community! I grew up in a small Shul and never had a real sense of community in a holistic way until I moved to _____. We have Shuls, Minyanim, an Eruv, a Mikvah, a Vaad Hakashrus, a Chevra Kadisha, Bikur Cholim, Chesed Committees, and charity funds. And now we have SANDY relief efforts. We really have everything. Just like Avraham, we are blessed 'bakol', with everything...

This weekend we put up a poster board of _____ letters of solidarity sent to us from Jewish children in Eli and Elkanah in Israel. What a blessing it is to get a bracha from pure and innocent Jewish children (even if their common message was that it is time for all of us to move to Israel). We are so blessed, and we should feel so empowered by the privilege

to be a part of the oldest nation on this earth, 'am Yisrael'.

It is to the rabbi, who I personally know and respect, and his congregants and to the 99% of Jews in America that I dedicate this week's message.

Part C:

Rambam in the section of Ta'ani'ot (fast days) deals with the way we should respond to disasters. Chapter one states:

It is a positive Torah commandment to cry out and to sound trumpets in the event of any disaster that affects the community...

This practice is one of the paths of repentance, for when a disaster befalls, and the people cry out to God and sound the trumpets, all will realize that it occurred because of their evil conduct...

*However, should the people fail to cry out and sound the trumpets, and instead say, "What has happened to us is **merely a natural phenomenon** and this difficulty is merely a chance occurrence", this is a cruel conception of things, which causes them to remain attached to their wicked deeds. Thus, this time of distress will lead to further disasters.*

Two distressing matters have occupied our thoughts these last two weeks: Hurricane Sandy and the re-election of Barak Obama to the US Presidency.

It is my firm belief (and that of many others) that the overriding obligation of our generation is the return to Eretz Yisrael. So much so that everything that transpires in the lands of the galut is intended by the Almighty to uproot the Jews from there and direct them to return home.

Hurricane Sandy:

In parashat Devarim 5772, I wrote regarding the approaching siyum haShas:

Religious communities in the galut, under the leadership of their spiritual guides, are about to commit a sin of unprecedented proportions.

The Gemara in Yuma, and quoted in the Rambam, states: ... A sin which has an adjunct of chillul HaShem is so severe that remorse, resolution, Yom Kippur and difficulties in life will together withhold punishment, but pardon will be possible only upon the death of the transgressor.

There are many examples of chillul HaShem, but the classic definition is when a well-known rabbinic personality acts in a way that brings shame to God's Holy Name or distorts HaShem's holy Torah. The chillul HaShem increases incrementally when two rabbis perform the transgression, and ever more so when it is done by 100,000 religious Jews together.

Next week, in a stadium in New Jersey, it is estimated that this will be the number of participants in the mass siyum (conclusion) of the last 7-year daf hayomi cycle.

It will be a worldwide production of many rabbis, roshei yeshiva, and grand rabbis who will draw good and innocent Jews into the most publicized chillul HaShem ever undertaken.

Close to one hundred thousand observant Jews declaring before the world that God did not give us the Holy Land, because if He did they would be there.

They will make a travesty of tractate Ketubot in which the Talmud declares that a Jew who willingly lives in the galut is as if he has no God.

They will make a mockery of the Gemara (abid. 112b) which relates that Rabbi Chiya ben Gamda would roll in and caress

the ground of Eretz Yisrael in keeping with the verse in (Tehilim 102)

For her servants desired its stones;

and they shall treasure its soil

One's very presence at this chillul HaShem conveys to the United States, to the United Nations, to the Arab League, to Hamas, to Hizbollah, to the engineers now producing the Iranian bomb, to the world that Eretz Yisrael is some far-off dreamland to be realized only when the Mashiach comes; but in the meantime it is Arab Palestine. This is no exaggeration. This is real life.

If you value your Judaism, celebrate the new daf hayomi cycle privately, modestly and even shamefully in the place where you reside.

Compare the lack of ideals and lack of religious passion of the nearly one million observant Jews living a pseudo-Jewish life in the United States, with the words of Yehuda Halevi:

"Who can provide me with wings? I would fly to you

*I would cause my shattered heart to reside amidst your
shattered ruins*

And: Yerushalayim will be rebuilt when the Children of Israel will yearn in earnest (for the holy city), and then (HaShem) will have compassion even on its stones and dust"

The soul of the saintly Rav Meir Shapiro of Lublin, who initiated the daf hayomi study, will not be in New Jersey. It will be here in Eretz Yisrael hovering over the authentic, sincere part of our nation; the part which is of one mind and heart with Yehuda Halevi.

For the Jews in the United States, I say: Be proud of your Judaism. Stay away from the colossal chillul HaShem –

deseccration of the Holy Name – about to be perpetrated in front of the eyes of the world. Be able to tell your grandchildren that you were not there.

My voice is but a small, shrill call compared to the cacophony of the religious leaders in the galut who are calling out to good Jews to show up in force and sanctify the Holy Name.

I leave it to you, dear reader, to decide who is sanctifying the Holy Name and who is defiling the Holy name?

On the night of Tish'a Be'av, as you sit and weep for the destruction of the Temples and the exile of our fathers and mothers to foreign lands, think. Today there are six million Jews in Eretz Yisrael and the gates are open for all Jews to return home. Is this the sanctification of the Holy Name? Or is the Holy Name being sanctified by those who refuse to recognize their religious responsibilities and cling to their lives in the galut?

I recall telling my close friends that I fear HaShem will not overlook this desecration of His Holy Name, and retribution will come to the areas and to those who partook in that public denunciation of HaShem's gift of Eretz Yisrael.

Retribution has come to pass in the form of wind, rain and ocean surges – HaShem's trusted messengers. And if the necessary conclusions are not drawn and the steps towards returning home are not taken, then the Jews in the galut can expect more disasters.

Many will deny this and say, as in the words of Rambam, *“What has happened to us is **merely a natural phenomenon** and this difficulty is merely a chance occurrence.”*

But Rambam also writes: *“This is a cruel conception of things, which causes them to remain attached to their wicked deeds.*

Thus, this time of distress will lead to further disasters."

This should be the message of religious leaders in the galut today. Anything less than the call to return home will cause them to be judged by Jewish history together with the religious leaders in the 1920s and 30s, who encouraged their people to remain in Europe rather than return to Eretz Yisrael.

Obama's Victory:

There are many religious leaders in the galut who preach that one need not go to Eretz Yisrael, because the government does not follow the laws of the Torah.

Of course, it is immaterial that, by law, Shabbat and all the yamim tovim are national days of rest; that all marriages and divorces must be performed and approved by the rabbinate; that the army, hospitals and public institutions must be kosher; that conversions can be performed only by the rabbinate; that the State spends hundreds of millions of shekels a year in support of yeshivot, and 50-60 thousand young men are deferred from army service because of their yeshiva studies; or the fact that the government builds the shuls and pays the rabbis' salaries and supports free religious education.

And all this by a State which was founded by people who were not observant, while we the observant remained in the galut of Europe rather than dirty our hands in preparing the land or become infected with malaria and other diseases that developed here over the 2000 years of our galut.

But let's leave all that aside. What does it have to do with Obama?

The Obama victory revealed the hypocrisy of many of the religious leaders in the galut and the hollowness of their claims against the Jewish State.

Obama won because the demographic makeup of the United States changed by the mass immigration of Hispanics and the big numbers of black births. The America that I knew as a youth will never return.

Now, if even half the religious Jews in the USA would come on aliyah, there would be a government here based on the Torah.

These religious leaders will have to find a more durable excuse for not coming home. One that will be able to stand before the onslaught of honesty and truth.

If the above-mentioned highly-respected rabbi wrote what he did in order to bring comfort and consolation to his suffering community at their time of desperation, then that is commendable. But if he really believes that they have everything – *Shuls, Minyanim, an Eruv, a Mikvah, a Vaad Hakashrus, a Chevra Kadisha, Bikur Cholim, Chesed Committees, charity funds, and now SANDY relief efforts; just like Avraham who was blessed with 'bakol', with everything* – then that community is being misled, as stated by the Rambam, *“What has happened to us is **merely a natural phenomenon** and this difficulty is merely a chance occurrence.”*

The rabbi went on to write about what a blessing it is to get a bracha from pure and innocent Jewish children (**even if their** common message was that it is time for all of us to move to Israel) and that we should feel so empowered by the privilege to be a part of the oldest nation on this earth, 'am Yisrael'. His reaction to the “pure and innocent” children’s message to return to Eretz Yisrael is disappointing, discouraging and even disparaging. For he appreciates the children’s letters of encouragement **despite** their call to come home to Eretz Yisrael.

This is a staggering statement.

I pray that the Jews there, those who were spared and those who were harmed by the hurricane will be successful in

rebuilding their homes, just beautiful enough to sell them to Americans gentiles who belong there, while the Jews come home to where they belong.

Part D:

As this is being written, news has arrived that after hundreds of rockets and mortar shells have rained down on our people, the seemingly never-ending patience of our government has finally snapped. My kohanic family is heavily involved in Tzahal, as were our ancestors heavily involved with the Macabim 2300 years ago. My prayers are that the results of Tzahal's efforts today will be similar to the efforts of Matityahu and his sons, and we should celebrate total victory in the newly constructed Bet Hamikdash on the Temple Mount.

Now is the time for your aliya to Eretz Yisrael, to prove your Jewishness to yourselves and your total obedience to the commands of HaShem.

Shabbat Shalom and chodesh Kislev tov

Nachman Kahana

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