

Tzav – Shabbat Hagadol 5777

BS"D Parashat Tzav – Shabbat Hagadol 5777

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Imagine...

The Hagada of Pesach states:

כל אדם חייב לראות עצמו כאילו היה עבד מצרי

Every Jew is required to see himself as if he (was enslaved) and then departed from Egypt.

One must muster up every power of imagination to be in the reality of Egyptian slavery: the beatings, loss of limbs, death, forced separation of children from parents, and spouses from each other, the degradation and hopelessness. Then the Moshe's unexpected appearance and cessation of work, followed by punishment of their Egyptian taskmasters, and the triumphant march to freedom under the banner of HaShem.

It is not easy to impose oneself onto a reality which is so far from contemporary existence; However, if the rabbis deemed it a necessary part of the Seder, it is possible.

Along the same line of reasoning, we should, at least once a year on the Yom Kaddish Haklali (on the 10th of Tevet, the general day of Kaddish for those whose day of death is not known), meditate and imagine that we too were in Bergen Belsen, in Auschwitz-Birkenau, Dachau, Treblinka or any of the

over 40,000 camps spread over Europe during the Shoah (Holocaust). And at the end of the horrific Shoah, the opening of the gates of Eretz Yisrael with the establishment of the Medina.

I would like to suggest another “make-believe” moment of meditation, albeit radically different with the emphasis on reliving the glorious days of our history. Let us imagine that we were present at the revelation at Sinai, and when we entered the Land on the 10th of Nisan with Yehoshua Bin Nun, the liberation of Yerushalayim under the leadership of our rabbi-general King David, and the dedication ceremony of the first Bet Hamikdash by King Shlomo (Solomon).

If we are already prepared to go down memory lane, let’s take a small leap from placing ourselves in actual experiences to experiences that could have happened.

What if, at the beginning of the Zionist awakening brought about by Binyamin Zev Herzl, it was the great religious leaders who had awakened the great sleeping giant called Am Yisrael to the mitzva of returning home.

Had the great religious leaders done so in the early 1900s and called for mass return to Eretz Yisrael, it would be correct to assume that the Shoah would have been prevented, because the Jews would have had a place in which to escape. And if in 1948 or 1967, the great rabbinic leaders in the USA had called for mass immigration to the Holy Land; then, instead of the Medina’s six and a half million Jews, we would be today 10-12 million with substantially less enemies living in our midst. There would also not be millions of intermarried Jews in the USA. Nor would there be Jewish self-haters who side with every anti-Semitic group calling for the destruction of the Jewish State.

Unfortunately, these experiences are only pipe dreams, and we are left to deal with the fallout of these missed

opportunities.

It appears that our nation is skilled in missing great opportunities: 80% of the Jews who died because they refused to leave Egypt; the Meraglim (scouts) who refused to advise entering the land; and the small number (42,360) of Jews who agreed to return with Ezra HaSofer (the scribe) to rebuild the second Bet Hamikdash, despite the miraculous intervention by HaShem at the time of Mordechai and Esther.

One of the most depressing “lost opportunities” occurred during and immediately after the Six Day War, caused by the nearsightedness of Moshe Dayan and the government. If not for the limitations placed on the army, our holy soldiers led by HaShem’s angels of victory, would have found themselves placing the Israeli flag atop the government buildings in captured Cairo, Damascus and Beirut. The abominations on the Temple Mount could have been eliminated and 90% of the enemy within would have run away.

We are now experiencing another lost opportunity by voluntarily placing a building freeze in our own land. President Trump and his cabinet cannot have the last word, even if it is wrapped in sugar, whereby Am Yisrael may or may not build in the holy land.

Perhaps we have never really internalized the historical implications of Pesach. For it appears that even after 3500 years of HaShem’s guidance, we have yet to mature in the way that HaShem intended to “bring us up”. We are like the proverbial child who has permission to cross the street, but fears to do so without the hand of his gentile nanny.

Despite our myopic national history of lost opportunities, HaShem – our ever-loving and ever-patient Father in Heaven – provides us with more chances, albeit at intervals of many years. There is one exception. With Medinat Yisrael, opportunities abound, if we would only have the emunah

(faith), courage, and foresight to take advantage of them.

Shabbat Shalom & Chag Pesach Samaiyach and Kasher,

Nachman Kahana

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