

Tzav Shabbat Hagadol 5780

BS"D Parashat Tzav Shabbat Hagadol 5780

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Our Father in Heaven and Us

He was gone

Midrash Shmot Truma 27,1:

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Rabbi Akiva said, the entire world was not equal to the day that (Shlomo Hamelech composed) Shir Hashirim, because all the scriptures are sacred but Shir Hashirim is sacrosanct.

Shir Hashirim is an allegorical poem of husband and wife (HaShem and Yisrael) who share great love but, so far, cannot find each other.

Shir Hashirim 5:2-6:

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• ַלְמַנְחָה תְּמִימָה , תְּמִימָה-תְּמִימָה
• ַלְמַנְחָה תְּמִימָה , תְּמִימָה , תְּמִימָה-תְּמִימָה תְּמִימָה , תְּמִימָה תְּמִימָה
, תְּמִימָה-תְּמִימָה תְּמִימָה ; תְּמִימָה תְּמִימָה , תְּמִימָה תְּמִימָה
• ַלְמַנְחָה תְּמִימָה , תְּמִימָה , תְּמִימָה תְּמִימָה
, תְּמִימָה ; תְּמִימָה תְּמִימָה , תְּמִימָה תְּמִימָה תְּמִימָה
, תְּמִימָה תְּמִימָה-תְּמִימָה תְּמִימָה
• ַלְמַנְחָה תְּמִימָה

2 I sleep, but my heart waketh; Hark! my beloved knocketh: 'Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head is filled with dew, my locks with the drops of the night.'

3 I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?

4 My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my heart was moved for him.

5 I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with flowing myrrh, upon the handles of the bar.

6 I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had turned away, and was gone. My soul failed me when he spoke. I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer.

On the 5th of Iyar 5708 (May 14, 1948) a great knock was heard on the entrance door to our spiritual and national redemption. A small number heard it and rushed to renew the ancient love between Creator and his chosen Creation. But the many moaned, "I have just retired for the night. I have washed and removed

my day clothing. How can I rise to dress again, now must I soil my clean feet on the dusty floor? And by the time the beloved wife reached the door, her searching husband had resolved that she would not answer his call and left in profound disappointment.

This needs no explanation.

So, what should the Jews in the galut do?

First and foremost, send your children to Israel as quickly as possible. Forget about Harvard Medical School, etc., just get them out of the galut. Once here they can be students or join a kibbutz etc. The main point is to secure their survival.

Next, nicely, but firmly take leave of the spiritual leaders who have misguided you to this impasse in your lives. Seek out a rabbi or leader who will swell your hearts with the love of Am Yisrael and the desire to join us in our holy land.

This crisis will pass; but if these circumstances do not convince you to come home, be assured that the next crisis will be worse. Despite the objective difficulties, rush to your nearest Israeli Consulate, The Jewish Agency or Nefesh B'Nefesh and apply for aliyah. Don't try to solve ALL the problems, because you will never succeed. If HaShem wants you here things will work out, but the initial move must be made by you.

I have often been criticized for seemingly being callous in my attitude towards the difficulties facing Jews not coming on aliyah. Picture a scenario where a person falls overboard and a sailor throws him a life jacket saying, "dope, put it on now", and the man in the water screams back, "talk nice to me!"

Every Jew who comes home is a life and family saved for Am Yisrael. Life in Williamsburg, Crown Heights, Flatbush, Kiryat Yoel or Lakewood is temporary at best. So dear brother and

sister "Please put on your life jacket and come home".

An Important Letter from a Diaspora Rabbi

Today the following letter from a pulpit rabbi in the States was forwarded to me. No name was given. I have deleted some repetitive but made no other changes.

– From a Diaspora Rabbi

Dear Congregant,

In the last few weeks our lives have dramatically changed. Our routines have been interrupted. We are confused, frightened, and unsure what will be from one day to the next like never before in our lives. This period has been a time of reflection and soul-searching for us all, and I have come to a painful realization that I must share with you.

I have misled you.

I didn't do this on purpose. I didn't even do this consciously. But deep down, a small part of me always knew that I was misleading you, and today I have to come clean.

Let me explain.

I developed a love for Torah in my yeshiva years and wanted to continue learning throughout my life on the same level. Becoming a rabbi was virtually the only way to insure that. Our community is full of professionals and businessmen who serve the community in many ways. They also have a great love for Torah; they attend shiurim, they make time for learning whenever possible, they seek guidance when questions come up, and they run their homes in the spirit of Torah. I have the greatest of respect for them. But I needed more, I needed to

be surrounded by Torah at all times..

Making it as a rabbi was my goal. I studied diligently, built my resume, and did everything I could to make connections in the right places. I accepted internships and entry level positions at prominent institutions to get my foot in the door. Eventually I received an opportunity for a full-time position at a small shul, and I stayed there for two years to develop my skills and make a name for myself. When a better opportunity opened up, I jumped on it. One thing led to another, until I became the senior rabbi of our wonderful kehilla, a position I have enjoyed for more than fifteen years, an eternity in this profession.

I realize now that my career path as a rabbi has been little different than that of a secular professional. I was little different than the doctor, lawyer, or businessman I always secretly felt were spiritually beneath me. Every step of the way I was simply trying to climb my version of the corporate ladder, and when I reached the peak, I wanted only to maintain my position.

I was always on the lookout for those who could bolster my career, and I shamelessly groveled to them. I would immediately identify those who pulled the strings in the shul and the community, and made sure to stay on their good side. When they engaged in behaviors that were unseemly or worse, I looked the other way. I rationalized. It was the only way to become a rabbi and remain a rabbi, I told myself. It was the only way to influence the community in the long term, I told myself. If I didn't do this I would be out of a job and someone else would do it; better me than the next person, I told myself...

I cannot fault myself for making the difficult compromises. But I fault myself that they were not difficult. I lost my way. I cared more about making it as a rabbi than living up to the great responsibility of being a spiritual leader, a true

teacher of the Torah. I lost sight of the ideals of my youth, of the mission I was supposed to be on, and became just another corporate professional with a title and an office.

The past few weeks have helped me to realize what I always knew deep down. I refrained from giving you tough mussar because I was afraid of jeopardizing my job. I discouraged young people from making aliyah because I was afraid our membership would age and die out. I discouraged older people from making aliyah because I didn't want to lose their money and stability. I discouraged myself from making aliyah because I wouldn't be able to make it as a rabbinic professional in Israel...

I lied to myself, and I misled you. I cannot live with this lie anymore. I'm sorry. From the depths of my heart and soul, I beg your forgiveness.

Maybe it is easier for me to realize this now because our shuls, yeshivas, and organizations are all closed. We don't know when or if they will be able to reopen. Economic hardships might make it impossible for many of them to survive even in a best-case scenario. Dreams of climbing the ladder in one's rabbinic career are less relevant than ever before, as the only pulpits these days are virtual.

So be it. My repentance may not be perfect, but repent I must. I now encourage us, all of us, to make aliyah. Enough with the excuses. Enough with the personal considerations. Enough with the biased arguments. We know deep down that HaShem wants us to return home, all of us. We need to do everything possible, both individually and as a community, to make that happen without further delay.

My final service to you as senior rabbi will be to serve as a true spiritual leader and facilitate our return to Israel, starting with me and my family, and whoever is willing to join us. I am prepared to sacrifice my prestigious position and

lucrative salary to settle for being an ordinary citizen in Israel, if that's what it takes. I am prepared to sacrifice my inflated notion of serving the Jewish people to return home and bring others with me. Indeed, there can be no greater service than that. Once I am there, I will find another way to serve the Jewish people, if necessary.

My family has already started preparing for aliyah and I encourage all of you to do the same immediately. Let us reunite in Jerusalem with joy, and march forward bravely through the unknown toward a wonderful, glorious future.

Signed,

Rabbi _____

I don't know who this rabbi is but obviously all his congregants do. I salute his candid and open admission of what goes on in many communities between the rabbi and the administration, and I would very much want to meet him when he arrives. Kol Hakavod.

Praying without a Minyan

A rule of survival in military basic training is never to stand in the front row in a roll call. Second row better, best is third row where you can hide behind the heads of the soldiers in front.

Today when most of us cannot daven in a minyan, standing face to face before the Almighty can be traumatic. A minyan serves a necessary purpose for many. For example:

A man comes to purchase 1000 carpets. If he purchases one, he will search every centimeter of fabric looking for a defect.

But for 1000 it is not feasible. So, what does he do? He randomly chooses a carpet here and there and if they are up to standard, he pays for the lot. In a minyan one can feel that his prayers will ascend to heaven after HaShem checks the rabbi and the chazan, but not so when one faces HaShem alone in the privacy of his home.

The halachic ruling in our situation is to daven at home (or if feasible having ten men standing on different porches or different lawns and seeing and hearing the chazan; which constitutes a minyan).

Davening alone can be an uplifting experience. Recall that the Kohen Gadol entered into the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur to serve HaShem and to pray – without a minyan. Yonah davened in the bowels of a fish without a minyan and HaShem heard him. The prophet Yechezkel davened in Bavel in front of an open window facing Yerushalayim without a minyan. HaShem hears the prayers of every Jew when they emerge from the depths of his heart.

So, in the interim, pray for the welfare of your family, for the community, for the welfare of Yerushalayim and the welfare of all Am Yisrael with great intensity while you are alone with HaShem.

Shabbat Hagadol Samayach,

Nachman Kahana

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