

Va'etchanan 5774

BS"D Parashat Va'etchanan 5774

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Don't Miss the Boat

Who can measure the pain felt by Moshe Rabbeinu when denied entry into Eretz Yisrael after appealing to HaShem 515 times, the gematria (numerical equivalent of the Hebrew word) "va'etchanan".

The great commentator of the TaNach, Rabbi Yehonatan ben Uziel (the most proficient of Hillel's 80 illustrious students) writes in Devarim 34,5 (Aramaic):

אנשי ארץ מצרים וכל בני ארץ מצרים וכל בני ארץ מצרים
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On the seventh of the month of Adar, Moshe, the Rabbi of Israel, was born and on the seventh of Adar (120 years later) he left this world. A voice resounded from heaven saying: All the world's creations come together and see the pain of Moshe, the Rabbi of Israel, who toiled but experienced no pleasure (compensation).

Moshe's life was replete with disappointments. At the onset of Moshe's mission as leader of the Jewish nation, he witnessed the death of the royal family of Egypt, with whom he was very close having being brought up as a prince in the royal court. He struggled to convince the elders of the nation that he was indeed HaShem's emissary. He was forced to forsake a normal

family life, and was disappointed that his two son's would not continue his leadership. Moshe saw the death of his beloved siblings: Miryam, and then Aharon. The younger generation whom he trained and tutored disappointed him in their conduct at Ba'al Peor, and much more.

But nothing could compare with the agony Moshe felt when his request to enter the Holy land was rejected, time and time again.

I just hope that Moshe in his lofty, eminent place in Paradise is unaware of the Grand Rabbis of Square Town and Boro Park etc., and the Roshei Yeshiva of Lakewood etc., and the pulpit rabbis in the communities of the galut, who all talk in the name of Moshe Rabbeinu, while they disparage the mitzva of living in Eretz Yisrael.

I personally cannot fathom the depths of Moshe's disappointment when he was so close to entering the beloved land, but could not. However, I imagine that there are people out there who come close to those frightful feelings. As in the case of families who planned on coming on aliya when the "kids" finish high school. And the "kids" actually finished this year. The plan was to sell the big house which they bought for 600,000 – 200,000 down and 400,000 mortgage from the bank. They would sell the house for one million, then pay off the mortgage of 400,000 and with the remaining 600,000 live in their dream house in Eretz Yisrael. However, the best offer they received for the house was 100,000 less than what they owe the bank.

Gone are the plans of aliya. No dream house in Ra'anana.

And the circle of disappointment will grow ever wider, when world events, like the expansionist imperialism of Russia will endanger the democracies of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, and force the US to enact a selective service law to draft your sons and daughters and grandchildren into the military.

I have been writing these weekly divrei Torah because I knew that the day will come when, for many varied reasons, HaShem will close the door on aliya to Eretz Yisrael. I felt that if I didn't warn my fellow Jews of this, I would be derelict in my duty as a rav and be in violation of the injunction (Vayikra 19:16)

אל תעמוד על ידו כשחבובך נמצא בסכנת מוות

Do not stand by when your fellow Jew is in mortal danger

Every culture develops its own set of idioms to describe similar situations. When one is absolutely late, because our language is halachic and Talmudic orientated, we say in our society:

הזמן חלף, הקורבן אינו עוד חלף

The time has passed, the sacrifice is no longer valid

But what is the origin of the idiom "he missed the boat?" Perhaps it goes back to the time when the throng was up to its shoulders in water, banging on the side of the ark, and Noach turned to his three sons saying: "They missed the boat."

This must be taken very seriously in view of the evil tentacles of anti-Semitism now penetrating all parts of "enlightened" Europe, and will cross the Atlantic more quickly than the Ebola virus.

Fulfillment of Prophecy

Two major personalities dominate the most tragic episodes in our history: the prophet Yirmiyahu at the destruction of the first Temple and Rabban Yochanan ben Zakei at the destruction

of the second Temple.

Yirmiyahu warned the nation of the pending destruction if they do not change their ways, and paints a lamentable picture of what life will be like (7:34)

אֶת-קוֹל הַשִּׁמְרַיִם וְאֶת-קוֹל הַבְּרִידִים וְאֶת-קוֹל הַבְּרִידָה וְאֶת-קוֹל הַבְּרִידָה וְאֶת-קוֹל הַבְּרִידָה
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I will bring an end to the sounds of joy and gladness and to the voices of bride and bridegroom in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem, for the land will become desolate.

Rabbi Yochachanan ben Zakai, in the time of the second Bet Hamikdash, and as recorded in the tractate of Gitin, when becoming painfully aware of the imminent destruction of Yerushalayim, came to an agreement with Aspasyanus (Vespasian), the Roman general. That in return for the rabbis' departure from the city the Romans will grant immunity to the yeshiva in Yavne, spare the family of Rabban Galiel and send medical aid to Rabbi Tzadok. The deal was struck and the city fell to the Romans. Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai witnessed the destruction of the Temple which had stood for 420 years, and the murder and exile into slavery of millions of Jews.

What did the rabbi think day after day, minute by minute until his own death? He agonized over the thought of when will God grant the Jewish people's return to Eretz Yisrael. When will the third Bet Hamikdash be built? How many Jews will yet have to die and assimilate until that time?

Yirmiyahu lived to see the frightful fulfillment of his doomsday prophecy, but did not merit to see the joyous fulfillment of his other prophecy (33:11)

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The sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, and the voices of those who bring thank offerings to the house of the LORD, saying, "Give thanks to the LORD Almighty, for the LORD is good; his love endures forever." For I will restore the fortunes of the land as they were before,' says the LORD.

And the hapless Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai did not live to see any consolation for what befell his people.

Day by day, we get visibly closer to the redemption of Am Yisrael. Shortly after this Tish'a Be'Av the Russians will open a new chapter in world history when they will invade Ukraine, and no one can predict where the dominos will fall.

The logical, Jewish conclusion of the two parts of this divrei Torah, is for every God fearing, thinking Jew to open his eyes and see the beginning of the new era in our history.

Cut your losses. Come quickly to Eretz Yisrael while you still can, and partake in the greatest events yet to be played out in Eretz Yisrael.

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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