

Vayaishev 5775

BS"D Parashat Vayaishev 5775

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Izinga Estate on the Ridge of Umhlanga:

A Symbol and A Symptom

Alongside the great unforgettable centers of Jewish life such as: Pumbedita of Bavel, Fez of Morocco, and Vilna of Lithuania, Am Yisrael can now boast of one more star in the guise of the picturesque Izinga Estate on the ridge of Umhlanga, a charming coastal village to the north of Durban South Africa.

Izinga has all that a God-fearing Jew could ever want. A fenced 20,000-square-meter development with luxury homes, a spectacular 350-seat synagogue, a modern Jewish day school and kollel, a state-of-the-art auditorium and function hall, a kosher kitchen and mikveh, sports facilities and more.

"This is the future", Rabbi Pinchas Zekry told a reporter from the Jerusalem Post, as he looked out from the synagogue to a cluster of houses in what was once a sugar cane field. And the reporter relates, that the Rabbi "has successfully consolidated the essentials of Jewish life in this single property", after witnessing over his years as its spiritual leader that the community was shrinking.

Izinga is situated in what author Alan Paton described as "the rolling hills" of what is now called Kwazulu-Natal and is

close to some of the most beautiful beaches in the country. It is a short drive from Durban itself, and an even shorter drive to a new business development center, a shopping mall billed as the largest in the southern hemisphere, as well as superb hotels, restaurants and golf courses.

The Durban Jewish community, through the outstanding and visionary leadership of Rabbi Zekry, showed the courage to look **towards the future**, to build, to create new worlds.

At a local ceremony, one of the community leaders stated, "When the Durban United Hebrew Congregation was confronted with the daunting challenge of reducing numbers and changing demographics, the members took a courageous decision to establish a Jewish center with state-of-the-art infrastructure in the growing hub of Umhlanga. This new infrastructure wisely focused on education by establishing the Umhlanga Jewish Day School, which is the proven path to **ensuring our continuity as a people.**"

One resident was quoted as saying, "On the one hand, the community is aging and perhaps even dying. On the other, if it is to survive and we are to keep young people in Durban and even attract newcomers, we have to encourage the development of Izinga".

Linda Nathan said that the Durban Jewish community had proved to be self-sufficient and successful, but it now needed "to look ahead to the future to ensure the continuation of Jewish life in **our city** for our children and grandchildren".

The Izinga Estate on the ridge of Umhlanga is indeed a symbol and a symptom. A symbol of superficial understanding of what Judaism is and what HaShem expects from His chosen people; and a symptom of a disease which is particular to the Jew called "galut".

The Jewish community of Durban S. Africa is dying, as are most other Jewish communities in the world outside of Israel. But

the good people of Durban, with the encouragement of the rabbis of S. Africa, cling to the flimsy hopes that “a fenced 20,000-square-meter development with luxury homes, a spectacular 350-seat synagogue, a modern Jewish day school and kollel, a state-of-the-art auditorium and function hall, a kosher kitchen and mikveh, sports facilities and more”— will guarantee Jewish cultural-religious life well into the future.

Have the good people of Durban never heard of that far away, wonderland called Eretz Yisrael? A place where the Jewish nation was born and molded, and will survive and thrive until the end of time? Or are they and their religious leaders so enclosed in a cloudy, dark, opaque, unintelligible bubble of denial that they cannot see the writing on the wall?

In our parasha, Rashi explains that Ya’akov felt that the time had come for him to retire, and enjoy at leisure whatever years that remained in his life. HaShem disagreed, rejecting Ya’akov’s resignation from active Jewish leadership. In fact, now was the beginning of the most emotional and active part of his life: 22 years of mourning over Yosef, ending with the family’s descent to Egypt to begin a 210 year odyssey.

Like the good Jews of Izinga Estate on the ridge of Umhlanga, and those in the communities spread across the United States and other places, the residents seek the comforts of life sprinkled with the trappings of Judaism, like a synagogue, day school, mikveh, etc. But as it appears starting from days of old, HaShem has other plans for His people. Plans which are predicated on the termination of the galut and the return of His people to Eretz Yisrael.

A Glimpse Into The Future

Our parsha begins and ends with dreams and their interpretations. Yosef dreams twice, both dreams understood to mean that Yosef will assume a position of eminence over his brothers; and each of the imprisoned ministers of Paro have dreams alluding to what will occur in three days' time on Paro's birthday.

One could ask: Why did HaShem envelop the future in a dream that requires interpretation, when He could show the dreamer what would happen in fact?

The answer can be best explained in the following story.

A man once sought absolute truth. He wandered from place to place, from one philosopher to another, all without gratification.

Then one day he came upon a cave high in the mountains in which lived a wizened old woman. She was ugly, to say the least, so much so that he could not even look at her. But when she spoke she lit up his eyes with the absolute truth of her words. She spoke of all aspects of people and life; of the physical and the metaphysical; of God and man. It was a delight to learn the truth from this very unsightly woman.

When the time came to depart, her last words to him were, "Don't forget to tell them that I am young and beautiful".

The meaning of this story is that as harsh and as ugly as the truth might be, the bearer of truth must present it in a manner with which people will be able to cope. The eminence of Yosef was presented in the form of sheaves of wheat and heavenly objects, rather than Yosef sitting upon a throne with his family prostrated before him.

A short glimpse into the true future as gleaned from the writings of Chazal, presents a bleak picture for mankind if they do not do tshuva. I will try to make it as "sweet" as possible. The following relates to the world at large. The reader is invited to glean the sources to find out for himself what will occur in Eretz Yisrael

There will be worldwide inflation when money will become worthless. The US dollar and other major currencies will drop, producing debts of many trillions of dollars of unpaid bills. Produce will fill the shelves but only the few will be able to afford it.

Graft and bribery will be rampant, as in the days of Noach when "chamas" (thievery) controlled society. Parliamentarians will sell their favors to the highest bidder.

There will be a breakdown not only of the extended family but also of the nuclear one, where parents will not care for children and children will be utterly disrespectful of parents.

Nature will act aggressively in the form of earthquakes and hurricanes in reaction to unnatural actions of humanity such as same sex marriages and other perversions. Most affected will be the centers of culture and entertainment.

The descendants of Yishmael will bring about three great wars; one on the sea, another on land and the third in a battle for Yerushalayim.

Russia will wage a bloody war with Turkey, and Iran will be the scourge and fear of the world.

Europe and the Moslem states will join together against the Jewish State, but at the crisis point they will begin destroying each other.

There is a lot more!

But the important thing is, that despite the threats and dangers, the safest place for a Jew will be only in Eretz Yisrael.

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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