

Va'yaishev 5776

BS"D Parashat Va'yaishev 5776

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Two Interdependent Elements of Judaism

I solemnly believe that Yehadut (Judaism) is comprised of two interdependent elements:

1- Living the letter and spirit of the Torah (Oral and Written) as revealed at Sinai and recorded in the Shulchan Aruch.

2- Jewish national life Eretz Yisrael.

Interdependent in the sense that, 1- If we do not live a Torah life HaShem will exile us from Eretz Yisrael. 2- In the galut (exile), the Torah we abide by is artificial, secondary and temporary, as stated by the great Ramban in his commentary to Vayikra 18:25, that the Torah was given to be kept in Eretz Yisrael. The Ramban is based on a pasuk by the prophet Yirmiyahu that the requirement to abide by the Torah in Galut is to insure that we will not forget the Torah when we return to Eretz Yisrael.

No one has said it better than the prophet Amos when prophesying the inevitable exile of the first Jewish commonwealth because of their disregard of the Torah and our restoration to the Holy land (9,9-15):

9 For I will give the command, and I will shake the people of Israel among all the nations as grain is shaken in a sieve, and not a pebble will reach the ground.

10 All the sinners among my people will die by the sword, all those who say, 'Disaster will not overtake or meet us.'

11 "In that day I will restore David's fallen shelter, I will repair its broken walls and restore its ruins and will rebuild it as it used to be,

12 So that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations that bear my name, declares the Lord, who will do these things.

13 The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills,

14 And I will bring my people Israel back from exile. They will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit.

15 I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them," says the Lord your God.

This has happened in our time! Destruction and bitter exile for leaving the Torah, and our return to the Land where the Torah was divinely commanded to be kept.

The 19th of Kislev

Tuesday of this week is the 19th of Kislev. This date is very significant for the Chabad community because it marks the release of the founder of Chabad chassidism, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi from imprisonment.

The Rabbi was informed upon to the Russian authorities by a Jewish opponent to Chassidism claiming that the Rebbe was helping the Turks at the time, when they were at war with Russia. Rabbi Shneur Zalman was charged with treason, imprisoned and released on Tuesday, the 19th of Kislev.

This day is celebrated by Chabad chassidim with great joy and feasting, in addition to words of Torah and Chassidic philosophy. In fact, as I am writing this, Jerusalem's Conference Hall (Binyanei Ha'umaa) is the scene of Chabad classes, books and a concert starring the great Avraham Fried. It will be attended by thousands of chassidim.

Interestingly the date of the Rebbe's release on the 19th of Kislev 1798 corresponded in that year to the 29th of November.

The 29th of November is a memorable date in our times. Because 149 years after the Rebbe's release, on the 29th of November 1947 the United Nations in session at Lake Success, New York voted for the establishment of the State of Israel to come into effect on the 14 of May 1948, with the conclusion of the British Mandate over "Palestine".

No one can deny that the establishment of the Jewish State after 2000 years of galut has greater and far more reaching implication for the Jewish nation than the release of the Chabad Rebbe from imprisonment 149 years ago. The Rebbe as great as he was, was one man who led several hundred followers at the time, whereas the establishment of the Jewish State reverberates for all Jews the world over, including those who are far from a Torah way of life.

Based on this I would like to pose several questions:

1- Why do we not see the same degree of enthusiasm from the Chabad chassidim on Israel Independence Day as we see on the 19th of Kislev, marking the Rebbe's release? And not only Chabad chassidim, but why do so many other observant Jews downgrade the great miracles happening daily in Eretz Yisrael?

2- Why is the world center of Chabad still at Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn, New York and not in Yerushalayim? This question can be posed also to the Orthodox Union (OU) and to the Young Israel movement.

3- There was a notice in Yerushalayim that a gentleman very close to the Rebbe z"l, will be speaking this week on the subject, "From a small town to global presence", referring to the many Chabad "shluchim" who can be found in the far corners of the globe. One could get the impression that there exists a rivalry between two groups competing for global dominance: Islamics who stand for JIHAD and the Chabad shluchim who stand for JEWHAD.

Is it really the goal of Judaism to be HaShem's global caterers, bringing kosher food to Jewish trekkers with a small side dish of Yiddishkeit?

Is it not more important that all of the nearly 7000 talented shluchim be using their experience here to form a more perfect religious society; one where Jews would wish to come to?

As it appears today, the message resonating from Chabad and other Chassidic sects and religious organizations in the galut is the negation of the centrality of the Holy Land in religious life.

And that is a distortion, corruption, misrepresentation, perversion and falsification of authentic Judaism.

The Valley of Dotan

Our parasha relates that Yosef sought out his brothers in the city of Shechem, but was informed by a man (or angel) that they had moved to the Valley of Dotan. When the brothers saw Yosef approaching, they threw him into a pit of serpents and scorpions, until he was sold to Yishmaelites.

The murder of the Ten Martyred Rabbis over 1000 years later was in lieu of the punishment that should have been meted out to Yosef's ten brothers. When the great leading rabbis were murdered, the quality of Severe Justice was gratified.

The Mufti Haj Amin Al Husseini, spent the World War Two years in Berlin with his friend and mentor Hitler, where he organized Moslems in aiding the Nazis.

In 1942, the Mufti with his German comrades completed plans for an Auschwitz-type extermination camp to be used against the Jews of Eretz Yisrael and the Middle East when the Germans would conquer the Holy Land.

The place they chose for the camp was the Valley of Dotan, which was where, unknown to the Mufti and his sinister friends, the brothers sold Yosef.

General Rommel was defeated at Al Allemain in Egypt, and the Germans never entered the Land.

What we perceived for 2000 years as the tragedy of the Ten Martyred Rabbis who paid the price of atonement for selling Yosef in the Valley of Dotan, saved the Jews of Eretz Yisrael 2000 years later in the Valley of Dotan from the fate which befell our brothers in Europe.

It is quite clear from our long relationship with the Holy One Be He that we Jews are like the blind groping in the dark, while HaShem protects us every step to insure that we do not make any fatal, irreversible mistakes.

Shabbat Shalom,

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