

Va'yaitzai 5776

BS"D Parashat Va'yaitzai 5776

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

The big atonement is soon to occur

Learning Torah has a myriad of benefits, not least of which is that one who has wide access to the writings of Chazal will never be taken by surprise by anything which occurs in human experience.

An angel informs Hagar of the impending birth of a son (Beraishiet 16,12):

: וְיִשְׁמָעֵל יִהְיֶה אִישׁ אֲוֵרָה וְכָף יָדוֹ בְּכָל אֶחָיו וְכָל אֶחָיו בְּכַף יָדוֹ וְיִשְׁמָעֵל יִחְיֶה בְּאֵוִרָה

He will be an uncontrollable man;

his hand will be against everyone

and everyone's hand against him,

and he will live in hostility

toward all his brothers."

I have frequently quoted the Zohar at the end of parashat Va'aira in Shmot. The Zohar informs us that in the future the wild, uncontrollable Yishmael will cause three great wars: one on the sea, another on land and the third in the vicinity

(could be 1000 kilometers away) of Yerushalayim.

The prophet Yechezkel in chapter 32 maps out the “war to end all wars”, when in the future the Christian nations of Europe will go to war with the spiritual descendants of Yishmael. In any case, the Jews in Eretz Yisrael will survive and thrive.

The cancer of Islam has spread to Paris. It will soon raise its murderous head in London, New York and Washington. It is in Africa, in Asia, in South America and even in Australia. “His hand will be against everyone, and everyone’s hand against him”, as HaShem’s angel informed Hagar.

The future is now here.

Humanity has crawled and stumbled for nearly six thousand years; a thousand years for every one of the six days of creation which Adam and Chava impaired, tarnished, blemished and desecrated. And the big atonement is soon to occur.

Hashem’s invitations repeatedly rejected by His people

The Jewish nation is discredited with four dramatic historical refusals; each one causing dire consequences for the nation.

1) The day of freedom was determined by HaShem to be the 15th of Nisan. Millions of Am Yisrael would leave Egypt, terminating 210 years of debilitating slavery, to become the Creator’s chosen nation. However, 80% of the people refused to venture into the treacherous desert and died during the weeklong plague of darkness.

An invitation by HaShem had been rejected by a majority of the people.

2) When Rechav’am, son of King Solomon, ascended the throne,

Yeravam ben Navat led the northern tribes in seceding from the united kingdom of David and Shlomo. In order to solidify the secession, Yeravam created a surrogate Bet Hamikdash in the cities of Bet El and Dan, and prohibited the people of the north from going up to Yerushalayim.

The Mishna in Tractate Ta'anit states that the 15th of Av was one of the two happiest days in the Jewish calendar, with the other being Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. The Gemara explains that on this day, Hoshea ben Ela, the last king of the ten northern tribes, rescinded the 200-year-old prohibition enacted by Yeravam ben Navat, and permitted the people of the northern tribes to go up to Yerushalayim.

If Hoshea was such a great man, asks Rav Kahana in the Yerushalmi Ta'anit, why during his reign was Shalmanetzer, King of Assyria, permitted to conquer and exile all the Jews of the northern tribes whose whereabouts are not known to this day?

The Talmud answers that Hoshea ben Ela opened the way to Yerushalayim – BUT NO ONE CAME. Hoshea ben Ela was personally held accountable for not imposing his authority by forcing people to renew their covenant with the holy city and for the sin of the people not reuniting with Yerushalayim.

Another invitation by HaShem had been rejected by His people.

3) On the 2nd of November, 1917 a letter was sent from the United Kingdom's Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour to Baron Walter Rothschild, a leader of the British Jewish community, for transmission to the Zionist Federation of Great Britain and Ireland. It begins:

"His Majesty's government views with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object..."

The British permitted unlimited immigration until the mid-1920s. In 1919, the number of Jews who came was 1806; in 1923 it rose to 8175; and from the Balfour Declaration until 1939, the number of olim was less than 300,000. By then, the Holocaust descended upon the Jewish people.

Yet another invitation by HaShem had been rejected by His people.

4) In 1967, HaShem invited Am Yisrael to return home. In the aftermath of our miraculous military victories, HaShem restored Yerushalayim, Yehuda, Shomron and the Golan to Jewish sovereignty. There should have been a mass aliyah of one million Jews to settle these lands. However, the number of olim was a heart rending dismal number.

Once again, an invitation by HaShem had been rejected by His people.

The result of the last rejection is a devastating holocaust – not one of bloodshed, because the Jewish nation could not bear another Shoah. This holocaust is one of assimilation where over 70% of non-orthodox Jews in the U.S. and other parts of the world are marrying gentiles.

As profound as the essence of Judaism is, it can be stated succinctly as follows: HaShem chose the Jewish nation and commanded us to perform His mitzvot IN Eretz Yisrael.

Any deviation from this formula is a perversion of the Torah.

In this parasha, our father Ya'akov experienced two dreams. In the first, Ya'akov sees HaShem's angels ascending to heaven and descending to this world. In the second, he sees how he can increase the number of animals in his herd.

The enormous difference between the dreams is that the first one with ascending and descending angels occurred when Ya'akov was in Eretz Yisrael; but while in chutz la'aretz even the

great Ya'akov dreamt of animals and wealth.

You will serve, but in which army?

Many people will claim that it will never happen. But in view of the challenges Islam has placed before the free world, the US will have no choice but to put boots on the ground in Syria and Iraq.

The US army is already spread too thin. In the very near future the US President will have no choice but to reinstate the draft. When that happens your sons and daughters will be inducted into the army.

Now one might guess that I am suggesting aliyah to Eretz Yisrael as an alternative. But what kind of a solution is that? For here too, one must serve in the army. True! But what a difference it makes when your commander was a yeshiva student who doesn't shave during the sefirah period; who understands that the regulation time of half an hour for shacharit is not enough; who makes sure that what you eat is kosher; who will not let you violate the Shabbat unless it is halachically required.

Your flab will turn into muscle. The ground you march on while you get calloused feet are the hills of Yehuda and Shomron, as did your forefathers thousands of years ago in the defense of Eretz Ha'kodesh.

Now it might be argued that there is always the 4D escape route which exempts divinity students from military service. But I would think that if the next war will be perceived as a religious war between Islam and the Western world's religions, it would be reasonable to assume that the ones who would be drafted first would be those who are religiously orientated. In which case, being a Yeshiva student would make one more

eligible for service.

A member in my beit kneset told me about his first day in the US army, in 1957. The first night before going to sleep, the sergeant called out to all the men, "Be very careful with your personal belongings. For all you know you might be sleeping next to a Jew."

I recall a poem we learned in high school. It described two soldiers in the First World War who were shooting at each other. One was a soldier in the German army and the other a soldier in the Russian army – both were Jews. The stanzas alternate from the thoughts of one soldier to the other. The German Jew asks Hashem why do I have to serve the Kaiser, and the Russian Jew asks Hashem why do I have to serve the Czar.

Both take careful aim, shoot and mortally wound the other. With their waning strength, they both crawl out to meet the man who is taking away the other's life. When they were very close one says, "She'ma Yisrael." The other says, "Hashem E'lo'kei'nu." And then gripping each other's arms both call out, "Hashem e'chad".

The clock is ticking. Send your children to Israel. If you fail to do so they will never forgive you!

So tonight, go into your sons' and daughters' bedrooms and look at them sleeping so peacefully.

Don't forget to pull up the blankets. You wouldn't want them to catch cold.

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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