

Vayaitzai 5780

BS"D Parashat Vayaitzai 5780

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Polar Opposites

'וַיֵּצֵא יַעֲקֹב מִבְּיַר שֵׁבַע וַיֵּלֶךְ עָרָן

AND Ya'akov DEPARTED FROM BEER SHEVA AND WENT TOWARDS CHARAN

The report of Ya'akov's departure from Beer Sheva is seemingly superfluous when the important factor in the now developing episode is that Ya'akov went to Charan. Rashi explains that the Torah is informing us that not only does the arrival of a tzaddik leave a deep spiritual impression on the environment, but so too does his departure leave a deep spiritual abyss in the people. Ya'akov's departure from Beer Sheva and Eretz Yisrael left a gap which would not be filled until his return 22 years later.

The leader of the Williamsburg Satmar community, as apart from his brother, the leader of the Monroe Kiryat Yoel Satmar community, arrived in the holy land. Ten days later he departed. The only newsworthy item being that he distributed five million dollars to organizations that claim that they do not accept Zionist government funding (I am skeptical).

There was no spiritual message that this leader of many thousands of anti-Medina Chareidim delivered on his arrival to

anyone outside of his limited flock of adherents; however, on his departure he left a deep impression on those who, for a variety of reasons, are far from Torah observance. They were plunged even deeper in the negation of anything that smacks of kedusha and Yiddishkeit.

Everything and everyone that Hashem brings into the world serves a purpose, significant or not. So, what does the anti-Medina and anti-Zionist message of Satmar (a town in Hungary which means Saint Mary) accomplish to serve our generation?

I suggest:

The episode of the Meraglim (scouts) who refused to enter Eretz Yisrael seems a bit bizarre to be true. These 12 men were the best that Am Yisrael had, at the time. They were the tribal leaders who personally experienced the wonders of Hashem at the ten plagues; the splitting of Yam Suf; as well as the death of the entire Egyptian army that was about to pounce on the newly freed slaves but ended with them at the bottom of the sea. The scouts stood at the foot of Mount Sinai listening to the call of Hashem in the first two commandments. Nevertheless, when they returned from scouting the land, there was an about-face that affected six hundred thousand of the nation's men between the ages of 20 and 60; convincing them to rebel against Moshe and Hashem.

It seems implausible that such a departure from the truth could come about with men who were so spiritually gifted and maintained such venerable positions in the national hierarchy. It was totally irrational that men who were looked upon with reverence and saw before their very eyes that Hashem was with the nation at every turn, could suddenly deny the reality of life that was theirs.

Similarly, the Satmar point of view is bankrupt; but the followers are blind like in the story of the "King's clothing", when the little boy called out "look, the King is

naked”.

The Satmar and others who share his views, cling to the debunked idea that the Jewish people are prohibited from raising even a finger towards what is known as “auto-emancipation”; but must remain in galut until Hashem calls for us to return. No Medina, no mass aliya, no political activity towards self-rule. Just eat, drink, be happy and make money until Hashem sends his emissary to whisk us off to the holy land, or until the goyim send us up the chimneys of their death camps – whichever comes first. And preferably we should lie on our backs and hand the land over to those who would continue the Nazi mass murder of our people.

Hashem did not send a miracle maker to the generation of Ezra, yet they returned to rebuild the second Bet Hamikdash, which stood for 420 years.

Jews became politically active towards the goal of national independence towards the end of the 19th century, and the Medina was established in 1948. Had we begun our trek towards self-rule 100 years earlier, the Medina would have come about in 1848 and we would be today not 10 million in the world, but 100 million Jews!

Medinat Yisrael with its 7 million Jews and its unprecedented military victories and scientific, economic and spiritual development could never have come about without the hand of HaShem at the helm. Never has a nation returned to its ancient homeland after thousands of years of being away, as we have. The great tragedy of the Satmar and their influence in the Chareidi world is their inability to admit that they erred. They will continue to oppose even the Mashiach if he comes without a shtreimel, speaking Hungarian Yiddish.

I often speak to people who follow the Satmar dead-end and I go away with a sick feeling. When bringing up the agony of the Shoah and the almost immediate establishment of the Medina,

how many times have I heard from them that there is no reason to discuss the Shoah nor the Medina, because it was clear that the Shoah was decreed by Hashem, and the Medina is the will of the Satan.

Indeed, these people confirm that the episode occurred.

An Unbridgeable Wedge

The Chareidim who long to see the negation of the Medina take me back to the mindset of one of my rabbis at the Rabbi Jacob Joseph Yeshiva High School, in New York.

The leading yeshiva high schools established a basketball league. For three of the four years I studied there, I was on the RJJ team and enjoyed every moment – win or lose.

This particular rabbi opposed our yeshiva being part of the league and was especially unhappy with me. He claimed that the league was fargoyisht (for goyim) and every member on the team was a “loser”. His problem with me was that I was a “player” and also a “learner,” and upon graduation even received the Talmud award.

We played once every two weeks. That rabbi who I really liked and maintained a relationship with far after I left the yeshiva when we both made aliya, he to Bnei Brak and I to Yerushalayim, was always informed as to the league’s progress. Whenever we won a game, he would start out the morning class by saying “the yeshiva lost it”, and when we lost, he would say “the yeshiva won it”.

Back to the anti-Medina Chareidim. They rejoice at the Medina’s failures and are saddened at its triumphs. I am happy to report that they are much more saddened than joyful, for the Medina’s successes far outweigh our failures.

In conclusion: Rav Nachman of Breslaw said, "The entire world is a very narrow bridge". Our Jewish world is even narrower: where with one false move one can find himself suffocated by the obsolete dogmas of yesteryear which history has long ago passed over, or by the intoxicating freedoms of super liberalism which incarcerate the conscience and equate immoral unnatural behavior on the same level as the great ethical ideals of Yehadut.

Our parasha reveals a lesson in human behavior: brothers, even twins can be polar opposites, apart in the world of ideas. Unfortunately, the realities of life often create an unbridgeable wedge between them. Case in point: Nine Satmars (and some other Chareidi groups) would never include a religious-Zionist talmid chacham to complete their minion of ten. Nine religious-Zionists would always invite them, but they would not come.

Shabbat Shalom,

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