

Va'ye'chi 5775

BS"D Parashat Va'ye'chi 5775

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THE MASHIACH WILL BE FROM THE HOUSE OF KING DAVID

The Book of Shmuel (1-16,12) describes the physical features of David which Shmuel noticed when they first met:

וְהָיָה רָדִים וְעֵינָיו יְפָאוֹת

And he was red (complexion) with beautiful eyes.

The midrashic compilation Yalkut Shimoni (Shmuel 124) explains that the "red" that Shmuel saw was an inborn cruel streak which would lead to bloodshed, thus disqualifying David from ascending the throne of Israel. Then HaShem told Shmuel "with beautiful eyes" meaning: the "eyes" of Am Yisrael are the Sanhedrin. And that David, who would indeed eliminate countless of our enemies, would do so only when sanctioned by the Sanhedrin.

TAP – The Action Project

On the thirtieth day of the Har Nof massacre, here in Yerushalayim, a memorial meeting was called for under the auspices of "Women to Women – United to Change the World". It was to honor the memory of the four murdered rabbis: Moshe Twersky, Kalman Levine, Avraham Goldberg and Aryeh Kupinsky,

by two local Arabs while the rabbis were at prayer, and to inaugurate "TAP – The Action Project".

TAP was created for the stated purpose of "small actions make big changes", whereby the "little" things in our personal behavior have an influence of what befalls a Jew in his life.

Up to now, it's all very nice; in the spirit of the Mussar Movement and all who follow it. Based on the assumption that just like the flutter of a butterfly's wings in the State of South Dakota can cause a Tzunami in the South Pacific, so too one little "lashon hara" in Boro Park or Har Nof can create havoc in the Crimean Peninsula.

The memorial meeting did not end without significant decisions. The Action Project adopted the 5 following MIDDOS (personal character qualities):

1. The Mirror – redefining ourselves
2. The Prism – redefining how we see others
3. The Gift – moving beyond our perceived limitations
4. The Shield – protecting and maintaining our values
5. The Up Arrow – connecting ourselves to God.

Their brochure sums up the initiative with the following: "All you need to do is to choose one mida... you are now part of TAP. The action project where small actions make big changes, and together, IY"H, WE WILL SEE AN END TO THE TERROR AND PAIN OF GOLUS VERY SOON".

Very negative vibes ascend from this initiative. For it implies that the two murderous Arabs were just instruments in HaShem's tool chest; whereas the real cause of the massacre was our unsatisfactory spiritual level. But if we improve then "IY"H, WE WILL SEE AN END TO THE TERROR AND PAIN OF GOLUS VERY SOON".

How much bloodshed must the Jewish nation suffer before we realize that just as HaShem permits the free will of good men

and women to be exercised in this world, so too does real evil have its chance to spread its carnage? Evil strikes at the very righteous as well as the non-observant Jew. It was the evil of man that sent millions of God-fearing Jews to their death; even those who abided by the 5 or 10 or 20 middos in their lives.

We are not at fault! At fault are the Arabs and their Christian allies who would see the demise of all Jews in the world. And they might have their way if we do not kill them first.

Applying the Concepts of TAP to History

It is painful when comparing the “holy, gracious” women of today with our “uncouth, primitive” mothers of yesteryear. Where were today’s noble women of Har Nof when the army of Israel returned from killing Galyat and the Phillistines, and our mothers sang (Shmuel 1 18,6-7):

וְהַנְּשִׂאִים יָצְאוּ מִכָּל עִיר וְעִיר בְּיַד יְהוָה לִקְרֹא לְדָוִד וְלֵאמֹר
:שָׁאוּל הִרְגָה אֶלְפֵי וְדָוִד הִרְגָה אֶלְפֵי אֶלְפֵי וְדָוִד הִרְגָה אֶלְפֵי אֶלְפֵי
וְהַנְּשִׂאִים יָצְאוּ מִכָּל עִיר וְעִיר בְּיַד יְהוָה לִקְרֹא לְדָוִד וְלֵאמֹר

When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with timbrels and lyres.

As they danced, they sang: **“Shaul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands.”**

And just to think that if we would have had better middos all

that bloodshed could have been prevented. Galyat could have lived to a ripe old age, and the thousands of Phillistines who were needlessly murdered by the Jews could have returned home and lived in peace with their Jewish neighbors.

Moreover, the encouragement given to David's aggressive tendencies had even more tragic results.

When David was being pursued by King Shaul, David's father Yishai, his mother and 7 brothers fled to the King Of Moav for protection; since Yishai's grandmother Ruth was from the royal house of Moav. The Moabites summarily proceeded to murder them all, except for one brother who escaped.

Upon ascending the throne David conquered Moav and proceeded to collectively punish the murderous Moabites, as is related in Shmuel 2 8,2:

וַיִּשְׁבַּח דָּוִד אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
:וַיִּשְׁבַּח אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

David defeated the Moabites. He made them lie down on the ground and measured them off with a length of cord. Every two lengths of them were put to death, and the third length was allowed to live. So the Moabites became subject to David and brought him tribute.

David randomly ordered the execution of two thirds of the Moabites, and not surprisingly the incident ends with the words, "So the Moabites became subject to David and brought him tribute". And surprisingly, the Jewish nation was never troubled by the Moabites again.

One might raise an eyebrow at David's behavior. Would it not have been more in the spirit of the Mussar movement and the yeshivishe world to analyze why his family was murdered, and then decide that the family was at fault for not conducting

themselves in accordance with the 5 TAP middos?

As in the words of their brochure: "All you need to do is to choose one mida... where small actions make big changes, and together, IY" H, WE WILL SEE AN END TO THE TERROR AND PAIN OF GOLUS VERY SOON".

Had Yishai and the family adopted the conduct of TAP, the Moabites would not have harmed them?

But please don't misunderstand me. I know full well why these women could not call for the government to enact revenge on the murderers' families, but prefer the "high road" of mussar in our battle against the murderous descendants of Yishmael. Because they protect their children from serving in the holy army of Am Yisrael, and it would be hypocritical to demand active punishment by the army while they hide their children under their beds, lest they be drafted to serve the nation.

So it should not come as a surprise that the Mashiach will be from the "House of King David" and not a product of a guilt-ridden galut world outlook.

Now to the Parsha

In his departing words to his twelve sons, Ya'akov deals very harshly with Shimon and Levi. Since the particular qualities of every one of Ya'akov's sons were transmitted genetically to the future descendants of that tribe, our grandfather Ya'akov is in effect criticizing the fundamental nature of the Kohanic and Levitic families. This is a very serious matter which requires explanation.

Ya'akov castigates them for their anger which brought about the death of one man as it says:

“Ki Be’Apam Har’gu Eesh” – in their anger they killed a man.

There is an apparent contradiction in this matter. Rashi, based on the midrash, points out that Shimon and Levi killed not only one man. They decimated the entire city of Shechem, so why did Ya’akov say they killed “a man”?

Rashi answers that in Ya’akov’s mind the entire population of Shechem was valued as no more than “one man”.

Now if Ya’akov held the idolators of Shechem in such low esteem, why was he so angry at Shimon and Levi?

Moreover. The most flowery and complimentary blessing was given to Yosef. However, Yosef was to have an illustrious descendant, Yehoshua Bin Nun, who killed not one man, nor one city, but hundreds of thousands of Canaanites who stood in the way of God’s dictate to Am Yisrael’s to possess our inheritance – Eretz Yisrael – with the command

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But Ya’akov does not relate to what this off-spring child of Yosef would do, rather he castigates Shimon and Levi for killing one Shechemite. How odd?

When one is suspected of carrying a contagious disease, the first medical act is to isolate the carrier. Ya’akov exposes the character fault of zealousness and anger of Shimon and Levi. So why did he say to them in chapter 49,7:

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I shall divide them among the children of Ya’akov and disperse them among the children of Israel”

This is a disturbing reaction on Ya'akov's part when observing the "character fault" of his two sons.

Indeed, Rashi even quotes the Gemara which says that the major function of the tribe of Shimon was to be the teachers of children all through the land, and the tribe of Levi was to bring forth those who serviced the Holy Temple! Now if their faults were so notorious, why did Ya'akov make them the molders of the minds of our young children, and why did he elevate the tribe of Levi to such an exalted position?

I suggest:

When Dina was assaulted in Shechem, nine brothers barely reacted; whereas Shimon and Levi went through the town killing all its people. Ya'akov said that in light of the other brothers' passivity, the punishment of Shechem appears to be the work of a "lunatic" rightist fringe group which does not represent the main stream ideology of Judaism.

Shimon and Levi were correct in their belief that Judaism states that whoever raises a hand against a Jew that hand will be punished. But the passivity of the brothers created a perception that Shimon and Levi did not represent Torah thought. Ya'akov blesses Shimon and Levi that they should disseminate the ideal among the entire nation, that malice done to any Jew would not go unpunished. When this becomes the norm of the nation, the "world" will perceive this conduct as part of the Jewish national character, to eliminate evil immediately when it raises its ugly head.

To this end Shimon becomes the teachers of the future generations and Levi its spiritual leaders.

Ya'akov is not angered at Yehoshua Bin Nun, the descendant of Yosef. Quite the opposite, because in Yehoshua's time the lessons of Jewish pride had already taken hold in the hearts of the nation; that anyone who violently stands in the way of our Jewish historical destiny will be defeated.

The “slavery” experience in Egypt was necessary to inculcate the lessons of Shimon and Levi; that we must never again be “guests” in the lands of others, but free people in Eretz Yisrael to obtain the power and national will to destroy any adversary who would rise up against us.

If today we are being taunted by the “world” as mistreating the Arabs in our midst it is because there are less than four hundred thousand Jews in Yehuda, Shomron and the other liberated areas, so we are viewed as fanatical imperialists, etc. If there was unity in our struggle for Eretz Yisrael and millions would have filled the liberated areas, the message would be that Hashem’s chosen people have returned home to continue the never ending relationship with the Creator.

But unfortunately the lessons of Shimon and Levi with the agreement and blessings of Ya’akov were lost in the two thousand year “slavery” in galut, except for the few who cherish the concept of Jewish pride, and devote their lives in sanctifying Hashem’s name in Eretz Yisrael and the world.

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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