

Vayeira 5776

BS"D Parashat Vayeira 5776

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Multi-Directional Flash Floods of Humanity

Have you ever experienced a flash flood in one of the Negev's wadis (a deep gully in the desert)?

It is an awesome experience and often deadly.

The sky darkens and it begins to rain. One hears an approaching train travelling at 300 kilometers an hour; however, there are no trains in the area. Suddenly a gigantic wall of water comes racing through the wadi, uprooting everything in its path, from trees to cars to trucks. If you are standing in the middle of the wadi at the time, you will soon become part of the Dead Sea. In no time the channel is filled and the water leaps over the banks spreading out over the desert floor in every direction.

The flash floods of the Negev serve as a metaphor for what is now happening in Europe. The migrants come from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and other places. They begin in Turkey from where they cross the treacherous straits to Greece and begin their long, trek towards Western Europe. They cross through Croatia, Hungary, and Austria too in their attempts to reach the west.

They arrive 6 to 10 thousand a day, racing across the fields

and rail tracks and roads in a huge tidal wave of humanity to get to the Gan Edens of Germany, Sweden and the UK, which they will swiftly turn into Gehennom for the Europeans.

It is indeed a sight to see. This mass of humanity running, shoving, pushing themselves onto the few available buses or trains, trampling the old and the young in their desperation for a "better life".

These scenes have a current and future connection for the Jewish people.

David Ha'Melech authored the Book of Tehillim, where we wrote in chapter 126 verse 4:

:שׁוּבוּ אֲנִי וְעַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל כַּמַּגְלֹת שֶׁל הַנֶּגֶב

HaShem, return to us the captives of Israel (the Jews who are now in galut) like the flash-floods of the Negev.

King David saw in his mind's eye that in the future the exiled Jewish people would return to the Holy Land as swiftly and as powerfully as the rushing waters in the Negev's wadis.

While the Moslems escaping from the Middle East are a torrent of humanity seeking a new homeland, if Nefesh B'Nefesh succeeds in bringing 300 olim three or four times a year we consider it a great achievement.

King David would have expected that after 2000 years of galut, the Jewish people, led by their great rabbinic teachers, would inundate the consulates and Aliya offices of Israel in a desperate lunge to return home. But that has not happened!

It is a black mark on our rabbis and educators who cling to the galut. However, the words of King David are prophetic, and

as such must come to pass. The Jews in the galut will desperately run home to Eretz Yisrael like the flash floods of the Negev wadis. If not willingly, then the scenes of desperation now taking place in Europe will in the future be of Jews who will be forced to fulfill the words of King David.

Two Eulogies

The Gemara in Megilla 3a discusses the important contribution of the illustrious Tana Yehonatan ben Uziel, the most outstanding student of Hillel (Suka 28a), with his Targum (explanatory translation) on Tanach.

As an example the Gemara quotes the problematic pasuk in the Prophet Zacharia 12,11:

“On that day, there will be a great eulogy (and funeral) in Yerushalayim, as great as the eulogy of Haddadrimon, in the Valley of Megiddon.”

Problematic: because we do not find anywhere in the Tanach a person called Haddadrimon who was eulogized in a place called Megiddon.

Yehonatan ben Uziel explains as follows:

“On that day, there will be a eulogy as great as the one said over Achav ben Omri (king of the northern tribes), who was killed by Haddadrimon ben Tavrison on the Gilad Heights, and as great as the eulogy for Yoshiyahu ben Amon (king of the southern tribes, from the family of King David), who was killed by Pharaoh Necha in the valley of Megiddo.”

Why did these two people merit such impressive funerals and eulogies, which serve as the model for the eulogies in the future of two great men in Yerushalayim?

The problem is especially acute with regard to Achav, who is mentioned in the Mishna in Sanhedrin 90a as one of the three kings who lost his place in Olam Haba (paradise). (The other two are Yeravam ben Navat and Menashe ben Chizkiyahu.)

It would be an understatement to say that Achav did not follow the Torah. He and his Phoenician gentile wife, E'zevel (Jezebel), sought out the religious leaders of the northern tribes and killed them all but 100 who were hidden in caves by the righteous Ovadia (Melachim 1,18:4).

They introduced idolatry into every Jewish home by the sword. But when Achav died, there was an astonishingly large and emotional funeral with loving eulogies.

The answer is that Achav, by all accounts, was a beloved leader. He brought great wealth to the land and fought in many wars to protect the independence of his country.

The way he died is indicative of his greatness as a leader who lived for his people. Achav fought his last battle against the Aramians (today's Syria) while standing in his chariot, an enemy soldier whose name was Na'aman (Yalkut Shimoni Melachim 1:22) shot an arrow randomly into the air. It came down and struck Achav through a small opening in his armor. Achav could have retreated from the battle to get medical treatment, or, at least, descended from his strategic position in the command chariot in order to be treated. But since this would entail removing himself from view of his soldiers, and thereby possibly weakening their resolve to fight, he chose to remain in his lead chariot until he died.

Achav was a highly respected and beloved leader, despite being a man devoid of Torah.

In total contrast, Yoshiyahu, King of Judah and Yerushalayim, was a tzaddik (righteous person.) In his lifetime, Yoshiyahu made extensive and costly repairs to the Beit Hamikdash structure. He eradicated almost entirely the worship of avoda

zara (idolatry) from the land, and put to death the priests of idolatry. He restored the "aliya la'regel" (pilgrimage to Jerusalem). The Tanach relates that during his rule, Pesach was not practiced in such a glorious manner since the days of Yehoshua ben Nun. Yoshiyahu was, like Achav, a staunch nationalist. He was killed in a battle in Megiddo, attempting to prevent the Egyptian army from using Eretz Yisrael as a land corridor to do battle with the army of Assyria.

The Gemara in Bava Kama relates that when Yoshiyahu's body was brought home to Yerushalayim, he was escorted by 36,000 pallbearers on the way to his tomb. The question was asked; why was Achav paid the same honor? The Gemara replies that in the case of King Yoshiyahu, they placed a sefer Torah on his bed and called out, "This man performed what is written in this Torah."

Both the God-fearing Yoshiyahu and Achav, the denier of Torah, merited the love of their subjects, for they had fought for the honor of the Jewish people and were protectors of Eretz Yisrael.

The prophet Zacharia predicted that in the future, Yerushalayim would be witness to two eulogies as great as those held for King Yoshiyahu and King Achav.

Since the destruction of the Temple and exile of our people, the city of Yerushalayim has not seen funerals as large in attendance and as emotionally charged as the funeral of my brother, Harav Meir Kahana and of Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin Z"L.

Rabin was no Achav, and Harav Meir was no Yoshiyahu, but in their time, both could be compared to those kings of the Tanach.

Rabin denied the Torah, but like Achav, he was a soldier who had defended the country since his youth. He was a beloved leader for many people, and thousands attended his funeral to

mourn his death.

Meir was a talmid chacham (Torah scholar) and a great leader for many people. He brought the plight of the Jews in the Soviet Union from page 54 of the newspaper to page one, which eventually brought down the Soviet Union and opened the gates of freedom to all Jews who wished to leave. There were close to two hundred thousand people at his funeral!

Each of the honored deceased represented radically different outlooks, and their deaths testified to their contrasting beliefs.

Rabin was killed on Motzei Shabbat of parshat Lech Lecha, and Meir was killed close to the following Shabbat, parshat Vayera (in different years).

In parashat Lech Lecha, when Avraham is informed that Sarah will give birth to a son, Avraham replies to God “lu Yishmael yich’ye le’fanecha” – “May Yishmael live before you”. Avraham comes to the defense of Yishmael and requests equal rights for his son born of Hagar, the Egyptian woman.

In parshat Vayera, Sarah demands that Avraham send Yishmael away, saying, (Beraisheet , 21:10)

“Chase away this maidservant and her son, for this son of the maidservant will not inherit together with my son Yitzchak”

Sarah instinctively sees the evil and wildness in the soul of Yishmael, and knows that Yitzchak and Yishmael will never be able to live together. God tells Avraham to abide by Sarah’s request, for she is correct in declaring that Yishmael’s progeny and the future descendants of Yitzchak would never be able to live together.

Rabin, who was killed motzei Shabbat of Parshat Lech Lecha, adopted Avraham’s position and believed that the two peoples could live together. Toward this end, he returned the PLO

murderers living in Tunisia to Eretz Yisrael and gave them forty thousand weapons. Harav Meir, whose holy neshama left the world close to parshat Vayera, adopted Sara's divinely affirmed position that the souls of the two are hewn from vastly different worlds – Yitzchak is the ben Torah and worthy to be a korban for God on Mount Moriah, while Yishmael is a "pereh adam" who prefers death over life.

God tells Avraham that Sarah is correct in her assessment of his two sons – Yishmael must be sent away, for he cannot live side by side with Yitzchak.

Harav Meir preached and pleaded that the people of Israel should see the future and take steps to prevent the tragedies we are witnessing to this very day. Rabin wanted to give them half of Eretz Yisrael, despite the words of our mother Sarah that "the son of this maidservant will not inherit with my son Yitzchak". History has played out according to God's command to Avraham to abide by Sarah's wishes.

May the souls of both these men be united with the living souls in Olam Haba.

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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