

Va'yigash 5772

BS"D Miketz, Va'yigash and Chanuka 5772

Part A:

Parashat Be'ha'alotcha, in the Book of Bamidbar, opens with the appointment of Aharon and his kohanic descendants to light the menorah in the Bet HaMikdash.

Rashi raises the question: Why does the issue of the menorah follow right after the Torah's description of the 12-day Mishkan consecration ceremony, when each of the 12 tribal heads, on his particular day, brought offerings to the Mishkan?

Rashi explains that the appointment to light the menorah was to compensate Aharon for his feelings of rejection when he realized that neither he nor anyone of his family was allotted a day to bring their personal offerings to the Mishkan, as was afforded the tribal heads.

Ramban rejects this explanation and suggests another for the proximity of the two issues. The compensation to Aharon was not the lighting of the menorah every evening in the Bet HaMikdash, but HaShem's declaration that 1500 years later Aharon's descendants, the Chashmonaim, would reconsecrate and purify the Bet Hamikdash, and rekindle the menorah.

I would like to suggest an alternate idea.

Aharon was greatly agitated when seeing the tribal heads bringing their gifts, while he was excluded. But it was not the gifts that evoked Aharon's feelings of being marginalized, because without Aharon to offer them up on the altar, the gifts would not have had any relevance.

Aharon's feelings stemmed from the very nature of the national hierarchy, as it presented itself at the time. As described in

the Gemara (Shavuot 14a) the national government was divided into four branches:

1- The Monarchy that was entrusted with civil matters, ranging from the military to commercial and foreign and internal affairs.

2- The Sanhedrin that dealt with Halachic interpretations of the Oral Law (It was not an appeals court because there is no recourse to an appeal in Halacha).

3- The reigning prophet of the time.

4- the Kohen Gadol (High Priest) and the Temple service, and, of course, the will of the people to accept their leaders as expressed through the tribal heads.

Within this hierarchy, the Kohen Gadol had little or no input in the day-to-day affairs of state. This is similar to a rosh yeshiva today who is relegated to the four walls of the bet midrash, with the affairs of state decided on by the political leaders.

(Aharon's disappointment was real, despite the fact that he wore the Urim ve'tumim [breast plate] which would answer questions of great national importance presented by the king, or the av bet din [leader of the Sanhedrin] or any personage who the nation is dependent upon. But the conditions required for this process were so limiting as to make it impractical).

In response to Aharon's frustration with the Kohen Gadol's limited input in national affairs, HaShem alluded to Aharon through the lighting of the menorah the profound and even decisive influence he and his descendants would have on our nation's history, as follows:

Ya'akov upon his death bed (Bereshiet 49:7) says to Shimon and Levi regarding their hot temperament and zealousness:



*Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; And their wrath,
for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter
them in Israel*

Shimon and Levi were zealous in their quest for justice. They destroyed the inhabitants of the city of Shechem for being delinquent in not bringing to justice the man who assaulted their sister Dina. Shimon and Levi also initiated punishing Yosef for his dreams, which they deemed to be undermining the family order and discipline.

With the intent to mollify the zealousness of these two brothers, Ya'akov laid down the rule that they would be dispersed among all the tribes. Levi was not given a tribal area as were the other tribes, and Shimon who did have a tribal area, became the teachers of Israel. This required them to be dispersed among all the other tribes.

There was a two-fold purpose in their dispersion:

1) To mitigate their extreme reactions in spiritual matters which would result from their interacting with the larger population, and

2) To arouse the usually dormant, passive and peace loving nature of the Jewish people to act with zealousness in defense of their beliefs.

The message given to Aharon was encrypted in lighting the candles: His descendants, the Kohanim, by being dispersed among the entire nation, will have a profound influence on the behavior of the Jewish people. And just as a little flame can ignite things vastly larger than itself, so too would the Kohanim lift up the holy spirit in every authentic Jew to fight the battles for physical and spiritual survival; and lead the nation in its desire to return to our glorious past centered around the Bet HaMikdash on the Temple Mount and the

renewal of the holy sacrificial service.

A dear, respected friend of mine, who also is a kohen, wrote the following letter to the Jerusalem Post. It is the letter of a man who most certainly could have joined the kohanic army of the Chashmonaim, as follows:

In his article, "The Power of One", Daniel K. Eisenbud criticizes the recent Israeli government's advertising campaign to encourage Israelis living in America to return home.

I disagree with him that the ads conveyed that, "Diaspora Jews are inferior to Israeli ones", but it conveyed the message that if they do not return in time, their children and certainly their grandchildren, will assimilate and be lost to Israel and the Jewish nation.

More important, I disagree with his premise that Israel needs Jews in the Diaspora to help defend us in the "global struggle". As he says: "To think that we can do all the heavy lifting from our small speck on the map of the Middle East is impractical and self-defeating".

That all Jews should be living in Israel is one of the foundations of Judaism. HaShem gave us Eretz Yisrael; HaShem gave us the Torah; HaShem gave us the Torah to be kept in Eretz Yisrael.

But what if all the Jews were to live in Eretz Yisrael, how could we defend ourselves?

Faith:

Rabbi Nachman Kahana, in his book, "With All Your Might 2", expresses it best in his commentary on last week's parsha Miketz and Chanuka: "It is the unremitting, enduring, everlasting, incessant, relentless, unceasing, uninterrupted, unvarying knowledge resonating in every pure Jewish heart

that we are God's Chosen People".

This is not a racist concept. It is not that we Jews are better than the rest of humanity, but that HaShem chose the Jews for an intimate relationship, as a bride and groom.

One need look no further than the brief history of the State of Israel, to bear witness to the intimate relationship between HaShem and His people.

We are all aware of the miracles that allow us to live our lives in Israel. This does not take away from the men and women who sacrifice daily to keep us safe. But our relationship with HaShem requires action on our part so that HaShem can act on our part.

Chanuka is celebrated to commemorate two miracles: The military victory and the miracle of the Menorah. Rabbi Kahana points out that the visible military victory "was for the world to realize our special connection with the Creator, whereas the miracle of the Menorah took place in the privacy of the Holy Temple's Sanctuary (the Kodesh), which only the Kohanim (priests) could see, in order to express the intimate relationship between HaShem and His people."

Eisenbud's title should have read "The Power of One". The One is HaShem. The battle was meant to be and will be fought from our "small speck on the map". We Jews must have faith that if all the Jews lived in Israel, then, together with HaShem, we will become a Nation of Kohanim.

Thank you, dear Kohanic friend.

Part B:

The Iranian navy is now engaged in intensive maneuvers in the Straits of Hormuz, the narrow waterway that connects the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, through which flows over 30% of the world's oil. Today's headlines announced that Iran

gave notice, that if the UN, led by the United States, extends its economic sanctions against it, they will cut off the flow of oil through the Straits of Hormuz.

This year, on the week of parashat Lech Lecha, I quoted the Zohar, at the end of parashat Beshalach:

*“The descendants of Yishmael (defined as those nations who practice circumcision by religious law or custom – Islam) are destined to cause three great wars: **one on sea**, another on land and another close to Yerushalayim”.*

And I wrote:

“The battle on the sea will be when the Iranians take control of the Straits of Hormuz (entrance to the Gulf of Arabia from the Indian Ocean) through which flows 40% of the world’s oil”.

If this materializes, then the world will find itself in dire straits, and the difficulties the Jews in the galut will encounter are alluded to in Yishayahu 24:13



*When thus it shall be in the midst of the land among the people,
there shall be as the shaking of an olive tree,
and as the gleaning grapes when the vintage is done.*

Rashi explains that the prophet is referring to the dwindled number of remaining Jews at that time.

Despite all the harsh prophecies, the Jews in Eretz Yisrael will have a more glorious future, as the prophet Yoel 3:5 says:



*And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved;
for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance,
as the LORD has said, among the survivors whom the LORD
calls.*

And the prophet Ovadia 1:17



*But on Mount Zion will be deliverance;
it will be holy, and Jacob will possess his inheritance.*

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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