

# Vayigash 5776

BS"D Parashat Vayigash 5776

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

## Chanuka Gift from the Pope

Prophecy of Ovadya (1,1-8):

וַיִּגַּשׁ אֶל-יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי עֹבַדְתִּי אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים וְעַתָּה אֲנִי עֹבֵד אֶת-יְהוָה וְאַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ (ב'  
וְאַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ:

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*We have heard a message from the Lord: An envoy was sent to the nations to say, "Rise, let us go against her for battle",*

*"See, I will make you small among the nations; you will be utterly despised.*

*The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rocks and make your home on the heights, you who say to yourself, 'Who can bring me down to the ground?'*

*Though you soar like the eagle and make your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down," declares the Lord.*

*But how Esau will be ransacked, his hidden treasures pillaged!*

*All your allies will force you to the border; your friends will deceive and overpower you; those who eat your bread will set a trap for you, but you will not detect it.*

*"In that day," declares the Lord, "will I not destroy the wise men of Edom, those of understanding in the mountains of Esau?"*

This is the prophecy of Ovadya regarding the end of days. It refers to an entity motivated by pride and considers itself invincible and infallible. But it is, in fact, "small among the nations" but feels secure in its berth "among the stars" and in "the heights." It is hated by many and will eventually be destroyed by its enemies.

The entity that fills this description is the Vatican. Home to Roman Catholicism, Vatican City is the smallest country in the world. It is encircled by a 2-mile border with Italy, and covers just over 100 acres, making it one-eighth the size of New York's Central Park. Benito Mussolini signed Vatican City into existence in 1929 with the signing of the Lateran Pacts.

The Vatican, headed by a long and infamous line of Popes, is known historically for deceit, cunning, brutality, secretiveness, hypocrisy and, above all, hatred of the Jewish people.

This week, the Jewish nation received a Chanuka gift from the Pope. It was a directive to his spiritual operatives that they should refrain in their attempts to convert Jews.

Immediately upon hearing this change of policy, several thoughts came to my mind. What transpired to make the world's largest criminal mafia organization – which provoked, sponsored and committed the most ghastly acts of torture and murder of my people for nearly 2000 years – to revoke one of the tenets of their religion?

I immediately rejected the idea that the Church fathers finally came to the realization that Mary had an affair with a Roman soldier, and gave birth to this mamzer in a stable after her husband threw her out. Because the reality of the Church with its far-flung economic and political power will always find a way to cast asunder any factual, historically indisputable evidence that they are living a lie.

Another reaction was that conversion of a Jew to another religion is a two-step process. The first and more difficult is to break the psychological, social and family bonds that connects a weak Jew to his 3500-year heritage. When that is completed, the second stage of baptism and conversion is relatively easier. The Pope and his cohorts, who always want to outwardly look immaculate as angels, concluded that it was a waste of time to bother with the first stage, because the Jewish Reform and Conservative movements are succeeding in distancing the Jews from their heritage more efficiently and faster than the Church's operatives could ever do. Every day, tens or hundreds of Jews break away from Judaism through intermarriage, when at the moment of wedlock to their gentile "spouse" they give a "get" to their Judaism.

I rejected this idea for being too clever and subtle for them, and realized that the truth is closer to home, here in the Holy Land.

The Vatican has an ambitious agenda for the Holy Land. In Israel, they have the smallest number of adherents of all other Christian sects, yet they are extremely wealthy, owning huge tracts of property. In addition to their very “worldly” interests they have a religious agenda – the building of more churches, mostly in the Galil in the area of the Kinneret. The Church subterfuges its intent to abolish the Medina by influencing our economic, political and international interests.

The Church knows that missionary activities are a sore point in Israel, and does not win them friends. Therefore, the directive to put a hold on missionary activities is aimed at gathering the good will of naive Israeli politicians who will run to repay the Church’s magnanimity, and as a starter by giving it a foothold on Mount Zion.

The time tested principal in our relations with gentiles is: When they threaten, strike first and hard; when they present you with gifts, escape as quickly as you can.

## **National Identity, Jewish Pride and Miracles**

The Gemara (Shabbat 22b) quotes a Tannaic source that after the uplifting miracles of the oil, the Sanhedrin waited a year before declaring the Halachic holiday of Chanuka. Why did they wait?

I submit:

In our long relationship with the Creator, the Jewish people have witnessed innumerable miracles; some huge, some public, some private, some breath taking and some unimpressive. Am Yisrael could not practically declare a holiday for every miracle that we experienced.

Therefore, after the miracles of the military victories and the oil, the rabbis waited to see what, if any, would be the influence of these events on the spiritual conduct of the nation.

At the year's end, the rabbis saw a dramatic change in the people's spiritual level when many discarded Hellenism and returned to the God of their fathers. Only then was it justified to declare a holiday for all future generations.

The precedent set down by the Sanhedrin to analyze the effect of current events on the spiritual level of the nation is as necessary today for us living in the Jewish State as it was 2500 years ago. In the 68th year since the inception of the Medina, it would be meaningful to objectively view what the Democratic-Jewish State has contributed to the spiritual growth of our people.

This is an immense issue, one which most people have an opinion based on objective facts and personal experience.

I submit that there are at least three game-changing, historical consequences for the Jewish nation as a result of the Medina.

1- **National Identity.** The greatest talmid chacham and visibly God fearing rabbi in the US, when required to fill out an official form which asks for "nationality" will write "American". Whereas a Jew in Israel, even one who is far from Torah will write "Israeli".

The Jews in the galut cannot be defined as members of a nation. They comprise separate communities, each with its individual interests and disinterests. When a Jew in Serbia, for example, is beset with problems it is meaningless for the Jew who lives in Seattle.

The Jewish State has restored to its citizens our identity as a distinct nation. We occupy the same land. We speak the

language of the Torah, eat the same products, worry over mutual threats and together enjoy national holidays. We weep when a soldier is killed or maimed, as if he was a blood relative. The national news station reports on a car accident in the north or south of the country, because a brother or sister was hurt.

In Israel we learn Torah, pray together and fight the enemy together. We daily witness the realization of the prophets' words regarding the in-gathering of the dispersed Jewish people, and we rejoice at the miraculous growth in all segments of our society.

2- **Jewish Pride.** Downtrodden for 2000 years, the Jewish people because of the Jewish State stand proudly in the international arena. The well-known Israeli chutzpa is just our way of saying, "Here I can stand tall, flex my muscles and express the Jewish genius that HaShem has given me".

The Gemara (Chagiga 5a) relates that HaShem (as it would be) cries every day over the lost honor and glory of His children Am Yisrael, because of the destruction and the exile. As we return and rebuild the Land and restore our self-perception as HaShem's chosen people, not only does our honor and pride grow but so does the bond between HaShem and His people.

3- **Platform for Miracles.** HaShem does not perform miracles for the Jews on the national level in the galut. The Medina is the natural platform for Hashem to exhibit His love for the Chosen people via the unprecedented military victories, the ongoing return to the Torah in all segments of our people and the economic growth. Do not take lightly the fact that we are the only country in the Middle East that has a water surplus.

Yet, however overwhelming the Medina's achievements, they only scratch the surface of future events. On our platform of history – Eretz Yisrael – HaShem will continue to embrace the Jews as we advance toward the restoration of our Biblical

borders and the in-gathering of all Jews. We still face the challenges of rebuilding the Bet Hamikdash, the restoration of the Sanhedrin and the Davidic monarchy.

Several days ago, there was a news item in one of the chareidi papers. A certain Chassidic Rebbe spoke in front of his adherents and said, "A yeshiva bocher (student) is no different than a soldier in a nagmash (a troop carrier)".

Honorable rabbi, I understand what you are saying. But permit me to respectfully say in all modesty – I've done both and want you to know there is a difference!

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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