

Vayishlach 5776

Four Questions

1. The number 400 appears in the Torah three times: At the Brit Bain HaBetarim (Covenant of the Divided Parts), HaShem said to Avram, "... Know well that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land and will be enslaved and tormented for 400 years."

The price Avraham paid for the Cave of the Patriarchs, as it is written: "...and Avraham paid Efron the Hittite 400 silver shekels".

And the soldiers who came with Aisav numbered 400 men.

What is unique about the number 400?

2. Compassion is one of the perceived qualities of HaShem. As an example, Rashi explains that HaShem took Avraham away 5 years prior to the years he was allotted at birth, so that he would not see his grandson Aisav go astray. HaShem is sensitive to Jewish suffering, so why did He subject the Jewish nation to 400 years of suffering in Egypt?
3. The Midrash relates that when Ya'akov left for Charan, Aisav sent his son Elifaz to murder him. Ya'akov convinced Elifaz that it would serve the interests of Aisav and Elifaz that rather than murdering his uncle, Elifaz should take all of his wealth and "an indigent is as good as dead". Why didn't Elifaz murder Ya'akov and also take his wealth?
4. The Jews left Egypt and arrived at the desert area of Refidim, where Amalek suddenly attacked them. What was the sequence of events that aroused Amalek to attack at

that time?

I submit:

It was an accepted more at the time that the number 400 was both a number but also an expression to describe a huge amount, be it money, soldiers or time.

All of Abraham's family was aware of the decree of 400-years of servitude in a foreign land. And were equally aware that the decree would be in effect with the children of Ya'akov, who was the spiritual heir of Avraham and Yitzchak.

When Elifaz was about to murder his uncle, Ya'akov warned him that if he would be murdered or die without children then the decree of 400 years of exile and bondage would by necessity fall on the descendants of Eisav, as the natural heir of Yitzchak.

Eliphaz and Aisav agreed on the decision not to murder Ya'akov, but let "nature" run its course with the Jewish nation to undergo the 400 year decree of servitude.

We can now understand that HaShem predetermined the number of years of servitude to be 400, which would seem in Aisav's mind to be close to eternity, and assure that Aisav would refrain from murdering Ya'akov so that the decree would not be implemented with Aisav's descendants.

When the Jews left Egypt after concluding the 400-year decree, Amalek (the descendants of Aisev and Elifaz) felt they could now destroy Israel without fear of incurring the decree of 400-years servitude.

Conclusion

1- Despite the apparent gulf between the individual incidents in the book of Beraishiet, and also the great divide between all the events in the flow of history, everything in the world is woven together in accordance to the wisdom of the Creator. We need only discover the unified theory laid down by the Creator, who is One and has made all things as one.

2- What was with Aisav in days of old, is re-occurring now. The Aisav-ist nations of Europe turned their backs on all moral responsibility, preferring that Ya'akov (Medinat Yisrael) suffer the brutality of terror, assassinations, suicide bombers, UN indignation, boycotts, divestments and sanctions, as long as it does not affect them.

However, the time has come for a U-turn in history. The two-millennium decree of suffering we underwent for our sin of leaving the Torah, is becoming part of the daily life of the European Aisav-ists, as stated in Tehilim 79,6-13:

וְעַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִשְׁמַע וְיַעֲשֶׂה
:וְיִשְׁמַע וְיַעֲשֶׂה

:וְיִשְׁמַע וְיַעֲשֶׂה וְיִשְׁמַע וְיַעֲשֶׂה

:וְיִשְׁמַע וְיַעֲשֶׂה וְיִשְׁמַע וְיַעֲשֶׂה

וְיִשְׁמַע וְיַעֲשֶׂה וְיִשְׁמַע וְיַעֲשֶׂה
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וְיִשְׁמַע וְיַעֲשֶׂה וְיִשְׁמַע וְיַעֲשֶׂה
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6 Pour out your wrath on the nations that do not acknowledge

you, on the kingdoms that do not call on your name;

7 for they have devoured Jacob and devastated his homeland.

8 Do not hold against us the sins of past generations; may your mercy come quickly to meet us, for we are in desperate need.

9 Help us, God our Savior, for the glory of your name; deliver us and forgive our sins for your name's sake.

10 Why should the nations say, "Where is their God?" Before our eyes, make known among the nations that you avenge the outpoured blood of your servants.

11 May the groans of the prisoners come before you; with your strong arm preserve those condemned to die.

12 Pay back into the laps of our neighbors seven times the contempt they have hurled at you, Lord.

13 Then we your people, the sheep of your pasture, will praise you forever; from generation to generation we will proclaim your praise.

Tehilim 90,13-16

: אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהִים 'וּ אֱלֹהִים (אֱלֹהִים)

: אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהִים (אֱלֹהִים)

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13 Relent, Lord! How long will it be? Have compassion on your servants.

14 Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.

15 Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, for as many years as we have seen trouble.

16 May your deeds be shown to your servants, your splendor to their children.

Excerpt from the book “With All Your Might”

There are situations in life where a Jew distances himself so far from his commitment to the urgent needs and demands of Am Yisrael, as if declaring to HaShem: “Erase me from the book that You have written” (Moshe’s request of HaShem if He destroys the Jewish nation).

I have in front of me a letter that appeared in the chareidi magazine “Mishpacha.” The writer explains why she opted to live in Lakewood and not in Eretz Yisrael. She concludes with the following: “As long as Eretz Yisrael remains mostly a secular country I cannot move there. It just hurts too much. I will just wait for Mashiach – hopefully, not too long”.

I would ordinarily not relate to this kind of letter – despite her anguish pulling at my heart strings – I will answer her for two reasons:

1- There is an unconventional, novel "chidush" to her approach. Our rabbis have taught that women, much more than men, have a natural love for Eretz Yisrael. That is why not one woman took the side of the Biblical meraglim (spies) when they spoke badly of the land. But among the other irrational positions taken by certain contemporary chareidi groups, we find that even their women do not feel the intrinsic love of the land of their righteous mothers.

2- The ideas expressed by this righteous Jewish woman are unfortunately rampant among certain circles of "bnei Torah" in the galut. I would like to tell her and all of them what "hurt" really means.

The pain of a wounded soldier – dati and not so dati – who has just lost a leg in defense of our right to live in Eretz Yisrael is a bit more than the "hurt" of that righteous Jewish woman.

Or the pain suffered by the parents of a soldier killed in battle or taken prisoner while defending our country.

The holy people of this land – dati and not so dati – who are living the words of our prophets that HaShem will restore us to this land are more "Jewish" than the most observant person in Lakewood, New Jersey, USA.

We are the followers of Yehoshua Bin Nun who liberated the Holy land, but those in the galut are followers of the other 10 spies.

The thousands of rabbanim and teachers found in every corner of Eretz Yisrael sacrifice in order to disseminate Torah among people who unfortunately did not have the privilege of a Torah education. Their physical and financial sacrifices are succeeding, as attested to by the many batai kneset and yeshivot that are established in places one would never dream that Torah would enter.

I would like the good people in Lakewood to experience for one day what our sons and grandchildren go through every day in the military to ensure that the murderers don't enter our land. They would run back to Lakewood!

The hurt borne by the holy people of Eretz Yisrael – dati and not so dati – in our quest to rebuild Jewish life in Eretz Yisrael is a bit more than the devastating “hurt” our righteous Jewish woman suffers when she sees a car being driven on Shabbat in Tel Aviv, which led her to avoid the pain by remaining in the Gan Eden galut of Lakewood.

The righteous Jewish woman's letter appeared in the magazine Mishpacha (Family), but unfortunately she and those like her are not part of my “mishpacha”, because by their words and actions they have requested from HaShem to erase them from the “Book that He had written”.

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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