

Yitro 5776

BS"D Parashat Yitro 5776

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

With all your heart and with all your soul

In his final address to the nation, Moshe says (Dvarim 10,12):

וְעַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל מָה יִשְׁאַל לְךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲנִי יְיָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ
:לְפָנָי וְלִפְנֵי יְיָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְרַגְלֵי יְיָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְעֹבֵד
וְלִפְנֵי יְיָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְעֹבֵד

And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to be in awe of the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to Him, to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul

Awe, obedience, love, to serve, with all your heart and with all your soul. When taken together, these feelings comprise the most profound emotions of which we as human beings are capable. However, they remain devoid of meaning when not predicated on the one overriding feeling – TRUST.

What would we say to a young woman who has received a marriage proposal and willingly accepts the conditions of “awe, obedience, love, service, with all her heart and with all her soul” but does not trust the man’s word nor his promises?

A story

Four chassidim wanted to see their Rebbe in a faraway city. However, they had neither money nor food for the journey.

Then one of them came up with a plan. Mendel was to play the role of a Rebbe and the other three his ardent chassidim. They would go to a small Jewish town and spread the word that a great tzaddik would be arriving the following day, and everyone could ask their questions and bring their problems to the Rebbe. And when the "Rebbe" blessed the people, they would shower him with enough money and food for the four chassidim to journey to their own Rebbe.

They arrived at the shul, where Mendel took his seat at the front of the table. The town's people began arriving to speak with the "Rebbe," and every one left a gift of money or food, as was the custom. The four renegades decided that, right after havdala on the close of Shabbat, they would escape from the town before their true identities were revealed.

On Shabbat afternoon, a man came to the Rebbe Mendel and told him with tears in his eyes that his son was deathly ill and the doctors said that only a miracle could save him. He begged the "Rebbe" to come to the boy and bless him with full recovery. The four scoundrels had no choice but to go with the man to his house. The father brought the "Rebbe" to the boy's room and left the two alone. Fifteen minutes later, the "Rebbe" came out of the room and returned to the shul. After Havdala was recited, the four escaped from the town with their new found money and food.

Six months later, the four chassidim were walking on the road and saw the boy's father approaching. They turned around to flee, but the father soon overtook them. He ran to the "Rebbe" and in tearful embrace and kisses thanked him for saving his son who, immediately after Havdala, had jumped out of bed totally healthy.

After the father departed, the three chassidim pleaded with Mendel to tell them what he had done in the room alone with the boy? He replied: "I fell on the floor with tears streaming down my face. I beat the floor with my fists and cried to Hashem, 'I am a lowlife. The worst of the Jewish people. A liar, a scoundrel and thief. But Father in Heaven, I beg of You, do not let me be guilty of extinguishing this man's pure and total TRUST in You and in Your rabbis. Please heal the boy for the sake of Your holy name and Your holy rabbis'."

Trusting Hashem in the Desert

The Creator demands basic requirements from gentiles but vastly different ones from the Jewish nation.

The highest ideals of the Seven Noachide mitzvot are intended to imbue gentiles with honesty and integrity. No to murder. No to theft. No to idolatry and sexual impropriety. Their requirements are intended to make them upright and honest (albeit with little or no expectations).

Hashem's requirements and expectations for His chosen nation of Yisrael are on a totally different quantitative level. While gentiles are required to be upright and straight, the Jewish nation with 613 mitzvot are required to be HOLY. The point where gentiles achieve their required goals is where the requirements of the Jewish nation just begin.

For a Jew to acknowledge the oneness and infinity of Hashem and the fulfillment of all His mitzvot is indeed admirable. However, it is devoid of true religious meaning when not accompanied by the ultimate requirement of TRUSTING Hashem.

During our desert experience, Hashem could have provided continuous sustenance for the millions of Jews in those forty years; but He chose to provide for us through the daily Mahn

(manna). The fresh Mahn was collected every morning anew, but spoiled at the following dawn.

The result was that for 365 days times 40 years (14,600 days), millions of Jews retired for the night not knowing if the Mahn would reappear in the morning. It was Hashem's way of training the Jewish nation not only to believe in Him but, even more, to TRUST Him.

Trusting Hashem Today

The number of Torah observant Jews in the Galut are estimated to be a little over one million. There is Torah learning and mitzvot observance. There are many rabbis, roshei yeshiva, chassidic grand rabbis, day school principals, teachers and daf hayomi learners.

They all believe in Hashem and His Torah as the absolute universal truth. They believe, but only on their own terms because very few TRUST Hashem.

By remaining in galut when the gates of the Holy Land are open to our return, their testimony speaks that they do not trust that Hashem will provide for their sustenance. It is a tacit admission that they doubt if Hashem will protect His people in the face of so many enemies. It is an acknowledgment of doubt in the legitimacy of the word of our prophets that Hashem will return us to the Holy Land.

At this time, when there are close to seven million Jews in Eretz Yisrael, they still question if we are in the process of the final redemption.

Where is the one eminent rabbi in the galut who will call out to his people to TRUST Hashem and leave the galut behind to return home?

Ultimate Trust and Reward

David, son of Yishai, who was to become the King of Israel, wrote in his Tehilim (Psalm 91)

:יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ

:יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High, and resides in the shadow of the Almighty

I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust

Here are some impossible scenarios where authentic Jews trusted Hashem.

Gideon, the Judge, defeated the entire Midianite army with only 300 soldiers (Shoftim chapter 7).

Yehonatan, son of King Shaul, with only his shield bearer with him vanquished the entire Philistine army (Shmuel 1, chapter 14).

David, the young shepherd, vanquished Galyat, the Philistine human war machine, with one well-placed stone from his slingshot.

The Macabim drove out the Greeks from Eretz Yisrael despite the enemy's awesome numbers and military might.

In our times, the degree of trust did not wane.

Miracles occurred in our own time, which rank among the most impressive that Hashem has ever wrought for His people. To name only two – the **War of Independence** and the **Six Day War**.

If you were there, the memories will never be forgotten. If you were not there, you will never know!

In 1967, the Medina was a mere shadow of what we are today. The army was small, the economy stagnant, the population unprepared for war.

Tensions began to rise three weeks before the beginning of armed conflict, when President Nasser of Egypt ordered the UN peace-keeping troops to evacuate the Sinai Peninsula. Nasser blocked the Straits of Tiran, Israel's gateway from the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean, which is considered in international law to be *casus belli* (justification for war).

Nasser led a coalition of four Arab States (Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Iraq), and the scoreboard at the opening of the 1967 hostilities looked like this:

- Soldiers: Israel 275,000 / Arabs 456,000
- Tanks: Israel 1093 / Arabs 2,750
- Cannons: Israel 681 / Arabs 2,084
- Warships: Israel 15 / Arabs 118
- Fighter planes: Israel 228 / Arabs 488
- Bombers: Israel 19 / Arabs 80
- Helicopters: Israel 45 / Arabs 101

The situation at the time of the War of Independence was even more desperate.

In both wars, the world waited impatiently to see the demise of the impossible Jewish state.

However, our Father in Heaven had other plans. Our enemies were defeated in shame and dishonor, and the fledgling Jewish State was catapulted to a higher quantum level within the community of nations. Because the Jews in Eretz Yisrael TRUSTED Hashem.

On a personal note: At the time of the Six Day War, we were

living in Kiryat Sanz, near Netanya. During the three weeks prior to the outbreak of hostilities, many people ran away from the country, including families from Kiryat Sanz. I was told of a yeshiva (not religious Zionist) that went to Switzerland, because the tension was disturbing their concentration.

Our home became the hub for many activities in the Kirya. Feiga was the postmistress and was involved in many other matters. I volunteered for Tzahal and was told to wait for a call up. It came, but only after the war's end because the military bureaucracy could not keep up with the troops who had defeated the enemy in six days.

The reward for trusting Hashem was not long in coming. At the war's end, we had increased the land area of the Medina three times over and the greatest prize of all – the Jewish nation was now sovereign over holy Yerushalayim for the first time in over 2000 years.

Those who trusted Hashem breathed in the exhilaration of His greatest miracles. Those who cowered in fear would have to live with themselves.

One more short story:

A man was climbing a high mountain, when night fell and the pouring rain created zero visibility. He slipped and began falling to certain death. Suddenly, he put out his hand and grabbed a branch jutting out of the mountainside, and found himself suspended between heaven and earth.

He began to pray. A thunderous voice emerged from nowhere. "Do you trust me?" the voice asked. The poor fellow cried out, "With all my heart and soul, I trust You."

"In that case," thundered the voice, "LET GO!"

The following morning, they found the man hanging on to the branch, dead from hypothermia, when between him and solid ground was a distance of ten centimeters.

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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