

# Yitro 5777

BS"D Parashat Yitro 5777

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

## The Era of Lackluster Leadership

The prophet Haggai, chapter one:

*1 In the second year of King Darius, on the first day of the sixth month (Elul), the word of HaShem came through the prophet Chagai to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jozadak, the chief Kohen.*

*2 This is what the Lord Almighty says: "These people (the Jews in Eretz Yisrael) say, 'The time has not yet come to rebuild the Lord's house.'"*

*3 Then the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai:*

*4 "Is it a time for you to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?"*

*7 This is what the Lord Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways.*

*8 Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build My house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored," says the Lord.*

*12 Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Joshua son of Jozadak, the chief Kohen, and the whole remnant of the people obeyed the voice of HaShem and the message of the prophet Haggai,*

*because HaShem had sent him. And the people feared the Lord.*

*So HaShem stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of the whole remnant of the people. They came and began to work on the house of the Lord Almighty, their God.*

The ill-fated rebellion against Babylon in 586 B.C.E, ended with the destruction of Yerushalayim and the magnificent Bet Hamikdash of Shlomo.

The Medes and Persians captured Babylon in 538 B.C.E., and Cyrus, king of Persia, issued a decree authorizing the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Bet Hamikdash (Ezra 1,2–4; 6,3). Under the leadership of Zerubbabel 42,360 exiles made the long journey home to Yerushalayim, where the city's walls and buildings were in waste and the Bet Hamikdash was no longer.

For the next two years, the returnees labored and by 536 B.C.E. had rebuilt the altar and parts of the foundation (Ezra 3,3–11). But in the face of Samaritan opposition and apathy on their part, the returnees discontinued their labors for the next sixteen years (4,1–5,24).

What could be more important than rebuilding HaShem's Bet Hamikdash? Evidently, the people felt that beautifying their own homes was of greater value. HaShem addressed this when he declared through Haggai (1,4):

:וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁאָלוּ אֶת הָאֱלֹהִים לֵאמֹר מָה אֲנִי עָשִׂיתִי לְבֵיתִי וְלָאֵלֶּיךָ אֵלֹהִים וְלָאֵלֶּיךָ אֵלֹהִים

*“Is it time for you to dwell in your paneled houses, and this house lie waste?”*

The Jews' neglect in rebuilding the Bet Hamikdash reflected their lack of appreciation for the great historic change that was happening.

We are living today in a repeat period of the times of Haggai when the Jews were fearful and reluctant to take advantage of the historical moment to assert their rights in the holy land and in Yerushalayim.

Fifty years ago, HaShem presented to His people on a gold platter of miracles the western side of the Jordan river (the eastern side will come later). During these fifty years, we have witnessed Israeli fear and hesitancy to officially annex our God-given Biblical lands to the Medina. The fear of upsetting the delicate balance between the Medina and the gentile nations has paralyzed our Jewish instincts to such an extent that even closing a porch in Ma'aleh Adumin can bring the owner arrest and jail time.

To our great chagrin and misfortune, we don't have leaders on the level of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel or Joshua son of Jozadak. So, the Temple Mount is desecrated and the lands of Yehuda and Shomron are viewed by our courts as occupied territories and we have become the laughing stock of Jewish history.

## **The Prime Minister & The President**

Our parsha relates an incident that revolves around a man and his son in law – Yitro and Moshe Rabbeinu. The father-in-law offers advice which the son-in-law accepts. In these days, we are witnessing a similar relationship but here the son-in-law Gerald Kirschner advises his father-in-law Donald Trump.

Our Prime Minister is in Washington to hear what the President

has to say regarding the limitations on our independence in our own land.

The PM will come back very disappointed after learning that the President intends to make a real estate deal with lands that belong to the Almighty and gifted to His children Am Yisrael.

I can even hear the conversation in the oval office. While the President is showering the PM with compliments and congratulations on the Medina's great achievements in our short 70 years, he then lowers the "axe" on any plans we might have for annexation or even building one new home in the areas. The President tries to assuage our PM by telling him that the US will never do anything to hurt Israel, and then send our PM home in a gilded cage.

However, if our PM would only learn from the prophet Haggai the conversation would be as follows:

*BN: Congratulations Mr. President on your spectacular victory against all odds. One might even take you for an Israeli.*

*DT: Thank you Bibi. But I have to thank my strategists and people in the field for their tireless efforts, and certainly to your "landsman" my son-in-law Yoel Chayim and daughter Yael.*

*BN: Mr. President, permit me to enlighten you regarding the results of elections in general. When I was elected PM the chief rabbi pointed out that the Talmud in tractate Kiddushin 76b states that every public official, even to the lowest level supervisor of irrigation canals in Babylon, is personally sanctioned by HaShem. So, our service in public life is due in part to human efforts but the results must*

*pass divine review.*

*DT: Very interesting and certainly creates another level of responsibility on all public officials. Now let's discuss the matters at hand, namely, the Israeli-Arab conflict. It is my intention to bring about a deal which involves all the regional countries, not just a bilateral agreement between the Jews and Arabs in the holy land. And you know that arriving at agreements is my forte.*

*BN: Mr. President, there is a saying in Yiddish, "besser iz der soina foon goot" translated as – better is the enemy of good. In other words: efforts expended in solving big problems can often result in destroying the possibilities of solving the smaller problems. So why don't we concentrate on the limited Israeli-Arab conflict in the holy land?*

*Mr. President, the Bible states that God has declared the Jewish people to be the sole possessors of all the holy land, from the Euphrates to the Nile. So it is our right, privilege and duty to be sovereign over all those lands.*

*DT: Mr. Prime Minister you don't have to tell me about the special relationship that prevails between the Creator and the Jewish people, however those rights over the holy land will be restored to the Jewish people only when the Messiah arrives. Until then, there is not even an obligation for a Jew to live in the land.*

*BN: Mr. President, who told you such a preposterous idea?*

*DT: My daughter's Chabad rabbi.*

The Prime Minister leaves the oval office to face the waiting Israeli press. "What did the President say?" they ask in deep concern.

The Prime Minister passes through the group as if in a stupor, repeating over and over four words the meaning of which no one there understands: "His daughter's Chabad rabbi, his daughter's Chabad rabbi".

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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