

Yitro 5780

BS"D Parashiot Beshalach and Yitro 5780

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

A Lesson for Life

An incident that occurred in my formative years as a student at the Rabbi Jacob Joseph Yeshiva HS in New York's lower east side.

I was one of ten boys in the Thursday journalism class who put out the yeshiva newspaper four times a year. The class was on the entrance floor to the building right above the school cafeteria. The rule was that no student may go to the cafeteria during study hours, but we considered ourselves to be the elite of the yeshiva, so the rules did not apply to us. So, one boy would collect orders from all the others – what they wanted us to bring from the cafeteria, from ice cream to spaghetti – which we would devour when Mr. Brown our teacher, who I really liked, was not watching us. It was my turn to bring the illegal, but kosher, food, but while making the order at the cafeteria the sky fell from above. The assistant principal who was the yeshiva's disciplinarian appeared. He asked me, "Kahana, what are you doing here?" Now of all the wrong excuses that one could conjure up I uttered the worst. "Well, we're not doing anything now in the class". At that moment I knew that I had sealed my fate in the yeshiva.

The assistant principal marched me up to the room and told Mr. Brown what had happened including my feeble answer and left the room and me at the mercy of Mr. Brown. All eyes were glued upon me as the guillotine was about to drop. Mr. Brown looked at me and in a low condescending voice said five words which I have never forgotten, "Kahana, don't pass the buck", (meaning

if you are caught with your hand in the cookie jar, take it like a man).

However, in our parsha Moshe passes the buck on to HaShem not just once, but twice; on the 15th of Iyar when the nation entered the desert of Sinai and demanded food and water.

Both times Moshe replied that they had no reason to complain to him or to Aharon when their complaints should have been directed to HaShem. Isn't that passing the buck?

But there is a difference between the two scenarios:

Passing the buck is when one attempts to transfer his personal responsibility – to someone else.

I was responsible for abiding by the rules of the yeshiva but put the blame on Mr. Brown. Moshe Rabbeinu had no personal responsibility for the fate of the people of Israel. All that happened to the nation from the day Moshe appeared to free them, Moshe served only as HaShem's messenger with no input into what HaShem would or would not do. And indeed, it was HaShem's responsibility to care for the needs of the nation that He had brought out of Egypt.

The above example has implications for our time, today – this minute.

President Trump has given Medinat Yisrael a fabulous gift wrapped in a magnificent package: recognition that the settlements in Yehuda and Shomron are not in violation of international law, thereby paving the way for Israel to annex them as well as all the land area in between to Medinat Yisrael. However, Mr. Trump cautioned us not to open the package before he gives his permission; in effect not giving us anything but reminding us that we are not the masters of our fate, but vassals of Washington. – We call this shiebud malchiot – subordination to foreign rule.

To add insult to injury, the world is up in arms at the thought that Israel might annex the areas we liberated in the Six Day War, and at the very thought that the Jewish nation is returning to our God-given ancestral homeland send shivers up and down the spines of the gentile religious leaders and of every anti-Semite.

The UN and the EU, and the whole alphabet soup of nations are crawling out of their skin at the unprecedented idea that a nation can annex land won – in a defensive war, when in fact it has happened many times in history.

And what should we be saying to the well-meaning liberal humanistic nations of the world?

I would declare that your dilemma has nothing to do with us. Your adversary is not the State of Israel or the Jewish people. Your adversary is the Creator Himself. The entity that brought this world into fruition, divided the lands between the various nations, and gave the area called Eretz Yisrael between the Euphrates and Nile rivers to His chosen people.

We are not passing the buck because it was never our idea, nor did we ever apply to be HaShem's chosen people. It was the Creator's initiative and was decreed by HaShem and repeated to every one of our forefathers. HaShem did not promise them Torah nor Shulchan Aruch; He promised only one thing – Eretz Yisrael.

If the nations have a problem with that they should go to the source of their pain – the Creator. But just keep in mind that in a fight between a feather weight and a super heavyweight, the lighter one will be out of the ring with the first punch. So be cautious with what you say and how you say it.

How much better would the world be if our political leaders would follow the letter and the spirit of the Torah and annex all of the land between the ocean and the river in the name of HaShem, the Creator. This might give an impetus to many

nations to realize the truth of the Torah, and instead of placing roadblocks in our way would consolidate their efforts to help us rebuild the country by first removing all the human obstacles in the path to humanities' salvation.

Tu Be'Shvat

What was the first sin committed at the dawn of creation? Most would agree that it was Adam and Chava's partaking of the forbidden fruit. But they would be wrong. Because the first rejection of HaShem's command was the united opposition of the trees to HaShem's command that they not only produce elegant fruit but that the taste of the fruit should also be in the tree's bark. The trees produced the fruit but refused to have the taste also in its bark. All this is stated in Rashi's commentary at the beginning of parshat Bereishit.

What were the trees thinking?

The trees were loyal subjects of the Creator, as was the very last electron millions of light years away from anything. But the trees were arrogant. They claimed that it was agreed that HaShem wanted trees to cover the earth's land mass. However, they claimed that if the taste of the fruit was also to be in the tree's bark, mankind would very quickly cut them down for food and the world would be treeless, against the will of HaShem. So, in order to execute the will of HaShem that there should be trees, we (the trees) must reject the command, because we know better than the Creator what is right for Him.

To this day there are those who look at the Torah and look at the world and claim that they know better how to run Judaism and how to produce a perfect world, while meanwhile destroying all the good that HaShem has brought about.

Shabbat Shalom,

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