

AND SO THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

FRIDAY NIGHT:

*These are the words that Moshe spoke to all of Israel on the other side of the Jordan in the desert . . .
(Devarim 1:1)*

We have been reading from the Torah now for 3,317 years. The Torah closes with Moshe Rabbeinu's death that was thousands of years ago, and therefore only describes the events until that time. However, it also addresses every generation not only as a history of past events, but as instructions about how to deal with the present as well in a Torah-manner. Therefore, there is something about the present that will always remain rooted in the past.

This is what Shlomo HaMelech meant when he said, "There is nothing new under the sun" (Koheles 1:9). The events change and the people are new, but essentially modern day history is just a revised version of the past. Therefore, when Moshe Rabbeinu addressed the nation in his time, he addressed Jews throughout history as well, maybe seeing them in his mind's eye at the same time.

Things really changed since Moshe's death. As the Torah predicted, after Moshe died the people went after the ways of the Canaanites. As a result, the conquering of Canaan did not result in the completion for the Jewish people that it was meant to bring about. After a short period of time, Canaanite influences infiltrated into the Jewish people's lives, making exile inevitable just 850 years after entering the land: the Ten Tribes to Assyria, and Yehudah, Binyomin, and Levi to Babylonian.

The Ten Tribes were quickly lost and haven't returned until this very day. The remainder of the Jewish people assimilated into Persian culture as we learn through the Purim story. However, even after the miraculous victory over Achashveros and Haman, a resurgence of Torah amongst those who returned to Eretz Yisroel under the leadership of Ezra the Sofer, and the building of the Second Temple, many Jews remained in the Diaspora and assimilation once again began to take its toll, not to mention more persecution.

Then the Greeks came and added a whole new dimension to the concept of Jewish assimilation. The enemy was no longer only the foreign conquering nation, but the vanquished as well: Misyavnim - the Hellenists. Enamored by Greek culture that emphasized perfection of the physical, the spiritual stragglers were once again overtaken by the likes of Amalek, intellectually-speaking, and they turned on those who refused to yield to Hedonism.

A miraculous victory returned the Temple to its rightful occupants, and later, the return of the land as well. But all of that was only temporary, especially when a Jewish civil war resulted in a Roman intrusion into Jewish affairs, the inevitable result being the destruction of the Temple and the Jewish way of life. And, if Jews had already been spread out in the Diaspora before that time, they were pushed even further from Eretz Yisroel under the Roman occupation until almost no one remained in the land. That's the way it stayed for about 2,000 years.

In the meantime, Christianity took the Roman Empire by storm. Ironically, whereas the Jews were previously hated and persecuted for their refusal to accept the hedonistic ways of the ancient conquering cultures, they became hated now for refusing to take upon themselves the religious culture of Christianity. However, as always, many Jews did not survive the test and had chosen to join rather than to fight.

However, in Asia it was Islam that stole the show, and they did to the Jews there what the Catholics had done and were still doing to the Jews of Europe, though sometimes each side could be a little more tolerant of the Jews than the other side. However, when Islam and Christianity went to war against each other, it was often the Jewish people who were caught in the middle and who suffered tremendously as a result.

Even after the Dark Ages gave way to the Age of Enlightenment, and Jews were granted additional privileges, equality never became a reality, anti-Semitism never died away, and the worst perpetrator of evil against G-d's people was still to come so close to the end of history.

SHABBOS DAY:

... Eleven days from Chorev on the way of Mt. Seir until Kadesh Barnea. (Devarim 1:2)

Talk about being so close and yet so far away. And not only that, but as Rashi explains, the Jewish people miraculously traveled the eleven-day journey in only three days just to expedite their arrival in Eretz Yisroel.

Then came the Spies, and with them came Tisha B'Av. It was on the ninth of Av that the Spies came back and provided their evil report (Ta'anis 29a). It was the crying they caused that led to the hundreds of millions of Jews who have cried since then throughout the millennia, and therefore it is appropriate to return to their story once again on Shabbos Chazon.

We had been at the border of Eretz Yisroel, poised to fulfill the posuk:

I am G-d, your G-d, Who took you out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, to be G-d to you. (Vayikra 25:38)

However, because of a few statements to the contrary about Eretz Yisroel, we brilliantly transformed an eleven-day journey that had become a three-day journey into a forty-year journey around Mt. Seir and back again into the Sinai desert. And, as if that wasn't enough, we kept wandering even after

we finally entered Eretz Yisroel under the brilliant leadership of Yeshoshua bin Nun.

Thus, instead of being our final resting station, Eretz Yisroel became just another stop along the way, before being pushed out of the land into Assyria and Babylonia. And all because we rejected Eretz Yisroel. Allow me to repeat myself: It has all been because we rejected Eretz Yisroel.

We hadn't rejected Torah, and we certainly hadn't rejected G-d, for that would have been certain suicide. On the contrary, being as spiritually dangerous a mission as spying out the land was at that time, Moshe Rabbeinu chose the most kosher Jews he could for the job. They had to be the most reliable people he could afford to send, leaders he had hoped he could count on to not return and mislead the people.

Indeed, the only way they could have come back and presented their negative report about Eretz Yisroel with G-d and Moshe looking on is if they had believed that staying in the desert was the bigger mitzvah. "After all," they probably told themselves, "conquering and settling the land will consume so much time and energy! When will we have time to learn as we have had in the desert?"

But the desert can never be Eretz Yisroel, and it is only in Eretz Yisroel that G-d can be OUR G-d, so what difference does Torah and mitzvos make, ultimately, if they have to first travel through the Klipos of other lands? Indeed, says Tuv HaAretz, all the Torah-learning, mitzvah- performance, and praying only ascends to Heaven through Eretz Yisroel, after first passing through the "impure" angel of the host land, and all those between it and Eretz Yisroel. That's why the Midrash says:

There is no wisdom like the wisdom of Eretz Yisroel. (Bereishis Rabbah 16)

Ten measures of wisdom fell to the world, nine of which fell on Eretz Yisroel, and one on the rest of the world. (Kiddushin 49b)

Eretz Yisroel is higher than all other lands. (Kiddushin 69b)

Well, it is certainly a lot closer to Heaven, and being so, one had to understand what a single hour of Torah learning, or a single mitzvah, or a single prayer can do for tikun olam (world rectification), compared to days of learning, many mitzvos, or lots of praying in Chutz L'Aretz. And, as the Talmud says in countless places, when it comes to serving G-d, quality is usually a higher priority than quantity.

Is it any wonder that Eretz Yisroel is the key issue affecting all Jews at this late stage in history, or that Dovid HaMelech referred to the Final Redemption in these terms:

You will arise and show Tzion mercy, for the time to favor her, for the appointed time has come. For your servants have cherished her stones and favor her dust. (Tehillim 102-14-15)

Thus, as we stand here in history close to the end, it is really close to the end of the eleven-day journey that first became a forty-year journey, and then a three-thousand-year journey. We are standing where the first Jews to enter the land stood, except that this time, we are destined to

complete the journey, for the time of wandering has finally come to an end. We have gone to the four corners of the world and we can only go home now.

Nu?

SEUDOS SHLISHIS:

G-d, your G-d will then end your captivity and have compassion upon you, and will return and gather you from all the nations to which G-d sent and scattered you. Even those at the far corners of the earth, G-d, your G-d, will gather and take you. G-d will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you will possess it. He will do good for you, and multiply you beyond previous generations. (Devarim 30:3-5)

By now many Jews are familiar with Nefesh B'Nefesh, the organization devoted to facilitating to Kibbutz Golios in our time from North America. Aside from providing a free one-way flight for families making aliyah, they offer stipends to give those families a little financial help to get started.

But why not let them tell us about their organization instead:

Over the last five decades, Israel has experienced waves of immigration from around the globe and has acted as a haven and homeland for Jews the world over. There are, however, areas of the world where the Jewish population is disproportionate to the number of those who emigrate to Israel. With millions of Jews living in North America, over the last twenty years, an average of only 1300 North American Jews have made Aliyah annually. While many believe that this low number reflects a waning passion for Zionism and lack of fundamental support for Israel, we believe that there are actually hundreds and thousands of Jews yearning, dreaming, and willing to make Aliyah, but needing assistance in making that dream a reality. By revitalizing North American Aliyah, we will continue to send an unmistakable message to our Israeli brethren, that even in these turbulent times, Israel has not been abandoned. We will additionally emphasize to the world that Israel is not just a haven for those fleeing religious oppression and economic distress, but rather that Israel is a primary choice for those who have professional stability and social comfort. A revitalized and steady wave of North American Aliyah will create a much needed and perpetual human bond between North America and Israel. Nefesh B'Nefesh was founded to achieve these objectives. The mission of Nefesh B'Nefesh is to revitalize North American Aliyah and to expand it for generations to come by removing the financial, professional, and logistical obstacles that are preventing many "would-be" Olim from fulfilling their dream. In the process, we hope to send an unmistakable signal of North American-Israeli Jewish solidarity and joint determination to strengthen the State of Israel. (<http://www.nbn.org.il>)

I'm not sure at this moment who chose this name or why it was chosen down here on earth, but maybe the following is why they chose this name up there in Heaven:

A person who ascends from Chutz L'Aretz to Eretz Yisroel with the intention to return experiences

the following spiritual change: upon reaching the outer side of "The Ladder" he is divested of all his klipos. He only enters with his Nefesh of Asiyah and cannot receive a Nefesh from Yetzirah. This is why he must observe all the holidays as they are kept abroad. Rav Chaim Vital wrote that he who is born in Eretz Yisroel has his NR"N (Nefesh, Ruach, and Neshamah) from [the angel] Metatron. Yet when they leave Eretz Yisroel they are enclothed by a garment of [the angel] Sandalfon. The [spiritual] shell that surrounds him is like that of an almond, the green soft layer representing Rahav and the inner harder shell symbolizing Sama'el. The wood-like substance inside the shell represents the shell of the Temuros. The thin shell, the bran that is attached to the food, is pure; it is from Sandalfon. This is the garment that he is enclothed with upon leaving for Chutz L'Aretz . . . Only the thin bran is not removed upon his return. He who is born outside of Eretz Yisroel is given his NR"N from the realm of Sandalfon. If he subsequently comes to live in Eretz Yisroel then he is given a NR"N from the aspect of Metatron, though the NR"N from Sandalfon doesn't leave him and remains a garment for his NR"N of Metatron. On the very evening of his arrival in Eretz Yisroel as he lays down to sleep, they (the angels) remove the NR"N that he brought with him and immerse it in the Dinor River. When they return his Neshamah, he is given the new NR"N from Metatron that is enclothed in the NR"N of Sandalfon . . . (Tuv HaAretz, p. 80)

So, making aliyah is really a case of a Nefesh for a Nefesh, and though it may not appear in the physical package the organizers on earth give to the new olim, it is certainly part of the spiritual package the Heavenly organizers give to those who make aliyah.

MELAVE MALKAH:

"Cursed is he who does not confirm all the words of this law, to do them." All the people must answer, "Amen." (Devarim 27:26)

Speaking of Eretz Yisroel, valuing the land and curses, it's in the news again:

'Pulsa denura' invoked against Sharon Jerusalem Post July 26, 2005 Yaakov Katz Posted on 07/26/2005 9:33:31 AM PDT by Alouette

Far-right activists instigated a pulsa denura (Aramaic for 'lashes of fire'), death curse against Prime Minister Ariel Sharon last Thursday night in an effort to thwart the upcoming disengagement plan. The ceremony was held late Thursday night at the gravesite of Shlomo Ben-Yosef, a Betar member who was hanged by the British in 1938 for firing on an Arab bus in protest of numerous attacks by Arabs on Jewish targets. Twenty married men, including rabbis and kabalists, participated in the ceremony. All 20, including Yosef Dayan, who instigated the same curse several months prior to the assassination of former prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, assembled at the gravesite, which is located near Safed.

Each man immersed himself in the mikve (ritual bath) before donning black garb and beginning to chant. They had received permission to invoke the pulsa denura from a host of rabbis and kabalists, who said it was the appropriate time to resort to using the curse. Far-right activist Michael Ben-Horin

explained that the point of the curse was to exempt a human from having to kill Ariel Sharon, allowing "the angels of destructions" to do it instead. Baruch Ben Yosef, a far-right activist who participated in the ceremony, told The Jerusalem Post that "The ten men prayed to G-d for him to rid us of the evil murderous dictator [Sharon]. Ben Yosef said that the gravesite was chosen because, "Shlomo was the antithesis of a Sharon." "Ben Yosef gave his life for the Jewish people and refused to recognize the British government, while Sharon does everything for himself," Ben Yosef declared.

As to the legitimacy of such an act, I am unqualified to comment. However, many others have and have posted said comments on the Net. I just thought it might be interesting to see the source of the term itself.

It says in the Talmud:

Eliyahu used to frequent Rebi's yeshivah. One day, it was Rosh Chodesh, he was waiting for him but he failed to come. He said to him [the next day], "Why were you delayed?"

He replied: "[I had to wait] until I awoke Avraham, washed his hands, and he prayed and I put him to rest again; likewise to Yitzchak and Ya'akov." "But why not awake them together?"

"I feared that they would be strong in prayer and bring Moshiach before his time."

"Is there someone like them in this world?" he asked.

"There is Rav Chiya and his sons," he answered.

As a result, Rebi proclaimed a fast and Rav Chiya and his sons were asked to descend [to lead the prayers]. As he [Rav Chiya] cried out, "He causes the wind to blow," a wind blew; he then said, "He causes the rain to descend," after which rain descended. When he was about to say, "He revives the dead," the world trembled; in Heaven it was asked,

"Who revealed our secret to the world?"

"Eliyahu," they answered.

Eliyahu was therefore brought and hit with sixty pulsei d'nura (flaming lashes) . . . (Bava Metzia 85b)

As to the history of the type of Pulsa d'Nora referred to by the Jerusalem Post and the actual text used, you can get that on the Net through Google. However, to get to the time in history when evil will disappear altogether and no one will contest our right to every last square inch of Biblical Eretz Yisroel, you can only get that by appealing to G-d to bring the Final Redemption, and as peacefully as possible.

May we be the generation to see Tisha B'Av transformed from a day of mourning into one of simchah for the Jewish people.

Good Shabbos,

PW/

Text

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