

A PARASHA THOUGHT

Lessons

This has been a difficult week for *Klal Yisrael*. This past Friday, the *masmid hador*, the *Sar HaTorah*, Rov Shmaryahu Yosef Chaim Kanievsky, ז"ל, was taken from us. This is probably the closest we have to feeling, on a national level, the *churban bayit*, the destruction of the Temple. Even those who never knew or met him can feel that there is something that has been lost in the world, and what once was will never be again. It's hard to put into words the feeling of loss that *Klal Yisrael* now has. Rov Chaim, as he was affectionately called by the Torah world, literally carried us on his back through his *hasmadah*, diligence, in learning. We are now bereft of his presence; we are like orphans without a father.

I heard from an *adam gadol*, a great person, that when national tragedies befall us, G-d forbid, there are two messages that Hashem wants us to hear. One is a national message and no matter who you are, where you live, or your age, the message is the same. It takes a *gadol hador* to know what message Hashem is sending to us as a nation. However, there is also an individual message that Hashem is sending as well. This message is highly subjective and is catered according to each individual's life, thoughts, and emotions about the event. If a person lives through a national tragedy and thinks about what the message is that Hashem is trying to send him, what his thoughts are and what resonates with him is the exact message Hashem intended that individual to have. There is no right or wrong message on an individual level; what you think

and feel is what Hashem intended you to understand through this event.

This week's *parasha* also deals with a national tragedy: the death of the two sons of Aharon HaKohein. The Ba'al Haturim says that Moshe said to Aharon and his children that they should not mourn because of the dedication of the *Mishkan*, but rather, that "your brethren, the entire house of Israel shall weep the burning that Hashem has brought." This was because when a *Talmud Chacham* dies, all of *Klal Yisrael* are like his relatives and join in mourning. This also has *halachic* ramifications (see *Yore Deah* 340:7). What is interesting to note is that the *Zohar* says (*Vayikra* 57) about anybody who is distressed and cries over the death of a *tzaddik*, and specifically Nadav and Avihu, that all of his sins are thrown away. When the national tragedy of a *tzaddik's* death moves a person to tears, those tears are so precious to Hashem that He completely wipes away the individual's sins. When we connect to a tragedy on a national level and feel the loss to the point we are moved to tears, *Klal Yisrael* once again joins together in unison, mourning their loss as one collective entity, making them deserving to be wiped clean and start anew by reconnecting to the real Father of orphans.

This should be the last tragedy that we face as a nation and all of our feelings of distress over Rov Chaim's death should serve as an advocate for all of *Klal Yisrael*. We should merit the complete redemption when we are dancing together with all our *Gedolim* as we are greeting *Moshiach!* 🕊️

GUEST CONTRIBUTOR
RABBI ADI ROLAND

THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

THIS WEEK WITH
RABBI YITZCHAK PREIS

Q. After Aharon, his sons, and the elders did all that they were asked to do in the opening *pesukim* (verses), Moshe tells them, "...this is the thing that Hashem has commanded that you do ..."

This line seems redundant. What was He asking them to do at this point that they had not already done?

A. The Netziv addresses this issue along the following lines

Moshe recognized that this moment of incredible spiritual euphoria was also a moment of great risk. Human nature is such that there is a powerful drive to serve Hashem passionately, but subjectively – based on our own emotional reactions and perspectives. We can sometimes be eager to display devotion, but with behaviors that are dictated by our own passion rather than by Hashem's regimen. As an example, when Korach's followers inappropriately offer *ketores* (incense), they are not doing so out of rejection of Hashem but rather due to misapplied devotion to Hashem. They are in fact ready to die as a result of achieving an intense level of closeness to the Divine.

Rav Yakov Weinberg, ז"ל, similarly explained the phenomenon of the many *Kohanim Gedolim* who adhered to *Tzeduki* (Sadducee) practice, each corrupting the Yom Kippur service despite the awareness that all of their

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THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

CONTINUED

Tzeduki predecessors died within the year. The 'yetzer hara' at work in this instance was the quest for unbounded intimacy with the Divine.

But serving Hashem on our terms is simply wrong. And as the *Mishkan* service was about to commence, Moshe stresses that "this is what Hashem has commanded"; the determination as to what displays of devotion are acceptable is not our feelings or emotions, but the specific directives of Hashem. 🕍

Something always bugged you about the upcoming parasha (or last week's)? Ask! Submit a question on the parasha by Monday at noon by emailing parasha@cincynkollel.org. Questions will be selected to address at the discretion of the Rabbi who is answering that week. Questions may be edited for brevity/clarity.



A SHINING EXAMPLE

RABBI EPHRAIM SKOLNIK

David Shafrani lived in Iran in 1979 during the Iranian revolution. It was a very dangerous time for Jews and many desperately tried to escape. However, one who was caught trying to escape was considered a traitor and would end up with a long jail sentence. To hide his Jewish identity, David decided to grow a long beard and dress up in traditional Arab garb. He then planned to fly across the country so that he could escape across the border. David was very nervous because if any security personnel stopped to check his papers his disguise would be uncovered and he would find himself in prison. David boarded the plane and sat down in his seat, and to his utter dismay a Muslim imam with his entourage boarded the plane and the imam himself sat down next to him. David started sweating and thinking, "G-d why are you doing this to me? If he asks me one question about Islam I am finished." The imam made small talk with him until the plane landed. As they deplaned, David's heart dropped as he saw rows of security guards checking everyone's papers. David was certain his papers would be checked and he would be discovered. As David got closer to the guards, they saw the imam and stood up straight and bowed in honor. As the imam passed through without being checked he turned to the guards and

TEFILLA TIDBITS

RABBI YAAKOV MARCHUK

We continue the *birchas hashachar* with the *brocha* of *shlo asani goy*, thanking Hashem for the gifts he has given us by making us a part of the Jewish nation. In the fall of 1913, Mendel Balius, a Jew living in Kiev, which was then a part of Russia, was accused of killing a Christian baby to use the blood for matzah. The prosecutor in the case brought teachings from the Talmud and Midrash as an attempt to prove that the Torah treated non-Jews as subhuman, giving Balius a license to kill the Christian child. One of the statements is from *parshas Chukas* (it is also read this week in *parshas Parah*) regarding the laws of purity, "Adam ki yamus b'ohel," when a man dies in a tent. The Rabbis expounded, "that you the Jewish people are called man, but the nations of the world are not called man." The question was sent to Rav Meir Shapiro, and he explained as follows: there are a few different words in *lashon kodesh* for man; however, *adam* is the only word that has no plural. Rav Shapiro explained that *Chazal* are teaching that the Jewish people as a collective unit are called *adam*, that all Jews feel the pain and *simcha* of each other, even of someone we may have never met. 🕍

said "these men are with me and this is my new friend. Let them all through." David could not believe it. What had seemed like the worst thing for him was really his saving grace. 🕍

RABBI ABA MARI'S BATTLE AGAINST THE SPANISH-PROVENCAL ENLIGHTENMENT (PART I)

RABBI NOSSON WIGGINS

The Jews of Medieval Spain and Provence who, for several centuries were living in Muslim-ruled territory, were often called to debate their faith with Muslim scholars. Because many Muslim scholars were great philosophers, a comprehensive knowledge of philosophy was needed for these disputations. Even after the Christian reconquest of Spain was nearly completed (1200s), the Jews, by Christian regulations, were required to be conversant with the philosophy of their day so that they would have the ability to disprove the Muslim infidels. Moreover, many Jews practiced medicine in the royal courts of the Spanish and Provencal monarchs and needed a thorough grasp of philosophy in order to complete their medical education. It was in response to these cultural conditions that Rambam (Maimonides) composed his *Moreh Nevuchim*, a guide to those who were perplexed and confused by many of the treacherous teachings of philosophy. Although Rambam's *Moreh Nevuchim* initially provided a clear path for the Torah Jew to navigate the world of philosophy, eventually people became so steeped in philosophy that they would interpret the Torah in allegorical terms. The results were catastrophic: Avraham and Sarah became symbolic figures of *chomer* (substance) and *tzurah* (form), and Pharaoh was just a parable for physical desires. Some even came to the conclusion that *mitzvos* don't need to be performed in a physical sense but only require intellectual contemplation. The most devastating of all was that certain Jews even denied that Moshe received the Torah from Hashem on Mt. Sinai and questioned why Moshe chose to forbid certain things and not others. A visiting *Tosafist* from Northern France – Rabbi Moshe of Coucy (author of *Sefer Mitzvos Gadol* – Semag) travelled to Spain in the 13th century and reported that many Jews had married gentile women and the *mitzvos* of *tefillin* and *tzitzis* were largely abandoned.

Two Spanish-Provencal scholars, Rabbi Levi ben Chaim and Rabbi Yakov Anatoli, were renowned for the philosophical lectures they delivered in their communities in which they utilized Greek philosophy to interpret the Torah. A spiritual holocaust and mass assimilation was imminent in Spain unless someone would put a stop to the widespread study of philosophy.

To be continued... 🕍

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