

Mazal tov on the 25th anniversary of the appearance of TT. The number 25 has special meaning for a kohen because it is the gematria of the code word KOH in the verse of the kohanic blessing: כה תברכו את בני ישראל אמור להם

Permit me to extend to you my kohanic blessing for many more productive years of Torah messages for the thousands who study TT every week - וישם לך שלום

Nachman Kahana

I **OFTEN THINK** how different my life would be if I could for just a moment see the face of my great grandfather Aharon, the first kohen, or the face of my great uncle Moshe Rabeinu. But obviously we cannot even vision how the greats of that generation looked.

But lo and behold, I was shown the faces of certain personalities of that era, albeit not in the fashion that I would have preferred.

I have seen the faces of these ten men: Shamua son of Zakur, Shafat son of Chori, Yigal son of Yosef, Palti son of Rafu, Gadiel son of Sodi, Gadi son of Susi, Amiel son of Gemali, Setur son of Micha'el, Nachbi son of Vofsi, and Ge'u'el son of Machi - the infamous meraglim.

I saw them in a video of the demonstration in New York this week of the haters of Eretz Yisrael, as they sputter out their venom against the holy State of Israel. These are the miraglim of our generation. They look so pious as they speak in the name of God in the sacrosanct tongue of Yiddish, except for one who spoke good old American English.

It is my feeling that the cumulative sanctity and piety of the tens of thousands who applauded every detrimental mention of the Jewish State does not come to the boots of two young Tzahal soldiers standing guard on one of our borders in the protection of the Jewish people in HaShem's Holy Land.

But HaShem in His greatness has injected a bit of His humor into this vile state of affairs. He has lead the planners of this Chillul HaShem to stage their farce during the week when we will read on Shabbat the episode of the miraglim in Parshat Shlach.

Happy Quarter of a Century Torah Tidbits

Torah Tidbits at its twenty-fifth birthday has an exceedingly modest name. When it was one page, "Tidbits" was an accurate description but not anymore. Torah Tidbits contains a wealth of scholarly Torah articles by rabbonim, talmidei chachomim, leaders of the Jewish community, conveying truly deep and inspiring messages. The days of perusing the Tidbits are long gone. It needs and deserves the time "studying" it and it is a genuinely rewarding experience.

Happy birthday Torah Tidbits and a sincere yasher koach to the creator, founder, and producer of this valuable publication for which thousands wait anxiously every week, Phil Chernofsky and his devoted assistant Ita Rochel. Their labyrinthine network of distributors are the unsung heroes of Torah Tidbits. They have earned our gratitude. That means Toni et al.

Best wishes for many more fruitful and productive years of enhancing Jewish life worldwide with Torah Tidbits.

Sholom Gold

The Passion of Our Time - Rabbi Sholom Gold

THERE WAS SOMETHING hauntingly familiar about the question posed in an old issue of Viewpoint, "Why are serious Jews like us living in America?" It seemed like an echo from the distant past – and then it came rushing back. The question had indeed been asked before. It's right there in the Kuzari, Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi's classic masterpiece of Jewish faith.

The Rabbi (Chaver) in response to the query by the King of the Kuzars, "Tell me some of the words that they (the Rabbis of the Talmud) said regarding Eretz Yisroel." The Chaver responds with a long list of Talmudic statements about Eretz Yisroel such as, "It is always better for one to live in Israel, even in a city that is mostly non-Jewish – than to live outside Israel – even in a city that is mostly Jewish. For anyone who dwells in Israel is like someone who has a G-d and anyone who dwells outside of Israel is like someone who has no G-d" ... The Rabbis praised "one who comes to live in Eretz Yisroel during his lifetime rather than one who is transported there after his death ... the air of Israel makes one wise ... anyone who walks four cubits is guaranteed a place in the world to come."

The King responds with a variation on the theme of why is a serious Rabbi like you not living in Israel? The Kuzari said: "If so, then you must have limited affection for your Torah. You have not made Israel your goal, nor your place of living and dying. Yet you say in your prayers: Have mercy on Zion for it is our life's home. I see that all your knee bending and bowing toward Israel is mere flattery or insincere custom ..." One could add the twice yearly L'shana Habaah Birushalayim at the end of Yom Kippur and the Seder night. What about Birkat Hamazon, especially the second

blessing where we thank G-d for having "granted as a heritage to our ancestors a desirable, good, and wide land."

How does one who has decided not to go on aliyah say all that and so much more? Major portions of our prayers focus on Eretz Yisroel and are known to all...

So the King has challenged the Chaver. He has asked the Viewpoint question!

I have always been deeply moved by the honesty and palpable pain of Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi's answer: "You have shamed me King of Khazar. It is this very sin that prevented us from achieving that which G-d promised us for the Second Temple...

the majority – including the important leaders – remained in Babylon. They preferred subservience in the Diaspora, so that they would not have to part from their homes and affairs."

In today's version of the answer, there is a total absence of hope, yearning, longing, anticipation, resolve and prayer. All the elements that make up the spiritual, emotional and religious holy baggage of the 2000-year exile are nowhere to be found in the present day response. No contrition, no regret, no disappointment, only a modicum of embarrassment - just enough to cure a very mild case of guilt and that's all...

Has Jewish law nothing to say about this most vital question? Indeed, every religious Jew in the Diaspora must come to grips with this crucial aspect of the question!

The Chazon Ish summed it all up in one terse sentence, "... the halacha has already been decided like the Rambam, Ramban and the other poskim that there is a mitzva to live in Eretz Yisroel, and it is well known how much the Chofetz Chaim longed to go on aliyah."

R. Shlomo Zalman said, "Just open up a Chumash and read and you will see that R'TZON HASHEM (G-d's will) is that Jews should live in Eretz Yisroel."

The express will of Hashem has all the force and power of divine imperative.

I have often wondered about the well-known statement of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai that Hashem gave three good gifts to His people and they are only acquired through toil and pain: Torah, Eretz Yisroel, and Olam Haba.

Can you imagine a Jew turning to G-d and saying, "Listen, Your Torah is a wonderful and magnificent gift – but no thank you."

Or, "Olam Haba is a gutteh zach, a great thing – but we can do without it."

Yet Jews can conduct themselves in a way which is in fact tantamount to saying, "Hashem - Eretz Yisroel – no thank you – I'll pass on that."

According to the prophet Yechezkel the presence of Jews in Chutz L'Aretz is an

awesome Chillul Hashem.

Eretz Yisroel must become a serious item on the active agenda of the American Torah-observant community...

So you have a choice. Remain in America as a spectator who witnesses great events or as an active participant in the drama of Jewish rebirth... You can watch history or make history.

And then there is the need to ask yourselves - is there not an uneven and unfair distribution of historic responsibility? "Will your brothers go out to war and you will remain behind?"

Keep in mind the great words of Theodore Roosevelt:

"He who does not participate in the passion of his time will be judged as having not lived."

Eretz Yisroel is the Passion of Our Time!

*Ed. note: The complete version of Rabbi Gold's article can be found at RabbiSholomGold.com
I shortened it considerably due to space constraints, but hopefully retained the passion. - PC*