

BITACHON LESSON FROM THE PARSHA

פרשת במדבר סיני תשפ"ו – Heads Up!

שאו את ראש כל עדת בני ישראל

Count the heads of the entire congregation of Bnei Yisroel (Bamidbar 1:2)

The Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 1:11) teaches:

א"ר פנחס בר אידי מה כתיב "שאו את ראש כל עדת בני ישראל" רומם את ראש גדל את ראש לא נאמר אלא שאו את ראש כאדם האומר לקוסטינר סב רישיה דפלן כך נתן רמו למה שאו את ראש שאם יזכו יעלו לגדולה כמה דתימא "ישא פרעה את ראשך והשיבך על כנך" אם לא יזכו ימותו כלם כמה "דתימא" ישא פרעה את ראשך מעליך ותלה אותך על העץ

[When it says to count the Bnei Yisroel, the Torah uses the word "שאו". It doesn't say "Elevate the head" or "promote the head," rather "שאו" like a person who says to the executioner: Remove the head of so-and-so. Hashem thereby hinted to Moshe by using the word "שאו", If they merit they will ascend to greatness, just as it says "Paraoh will lift up your head and restore you to your position" (Bereishis 40:13). If they do not merit, they will all die, just as it says "Paraoh will lift up your head from upon you, and hang you on a tree" (Bereishis 40:19).

The Midrash is telling us that the same word, שאו, can convey two contrasting realities: "uplift the head" or "remove the head".

Hashem was telling the Yidden that they have two paths to choose from; the path to elevation or the path to extinction.

This is how Klal Yisroel functions throughout the ages - we are either at the height of existence above all nations of the world, or at the brink of annihilation at the hands of the nations of the world. There is no middle ground. Klal Yisroel has no "neutral" existence; we are either all the way up or all the way down.

If we fulfill the will of Hashem, we are lifted above everyone else, as the Posuk (Devarim 28:1) tells us:

והיה אם שמעו תשמע בקול ה' אלהיך... ותתנף ה' אלהיך על כל גוים הארץ

However, if we don't fulfill the will of Hashem, we are trampled upon by everyone else, as the Posuk (Devarim 28:37) tells us:

והיית לשמה לשמה ולשניגה בכל העמים אשר יגהגך ה' שמה

The Gemara (Kesubos 66b) relates a remark by Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai after he witnessed the daughter of Nakdiman ben Gurion, one of the wealthiest Yidden in Yerushalaim, having to forage for kernels of barley from within the manure of Arabian camels:

בכה רבן יוחנן בן זכאי ואמר אשריכם ישראל בזמן שעושין רצונו של מקום אין כל אומה ולשון שולטת בהם ובזמן שאין עושין רצונו של מקום מוסרין ביד אומה שפלה ולא ביד אומה שפלה אלא ביד בהמתן של אומה שפלה

Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai cried and said: "How fortunate is Klal Yisroel, for when they fulfill the will of Hashem, no

nation can rule over them; and when they do not fulfill the will of Hashem, He delivers them into the hand of a lowly nation. Not just into the hand of a lowly nation, but even into the hand of the animals of a lowly nation."

Why is it this way?

The MaHarsha explains that all the nations of the world have a heavenly angel/mazel that administers their earthly affairs "naturally". Besides Klal Yisroel; we are under the direct jurisdiction of Hashem - כי חלק ה' עמו יעקב הקב נחלתו. When we behave appropriately, the Shechina is with us, and we are untouchable. When we don't behave appropriately, the Shechina departs from us, and we remain vulnerable, despised and trapped in the world of the angels of our oppressor nations.

The nations of the world are tethered to Olam Hazei - this is their endgame. Klal Yisroel, on the other hand, is only passing through Olam Hazei; our endgame is Olam Haba. Therefore, when we try to imitate the Goyim and encroach on "their world", we are shunned and despised like usurpers- which we are.

When Yidden suffer - individually or collectively - there's nothing "natural" about it, as the rest of the world doesn't suffer that way. Obviously it's the Hand of Hashem, guiding us away from the path of the rest of the world, and pointing us to the right path that leads to the next world.

A Yid's job is to rely on Hashem, trust Hashem and recognize that Hashem has one goal for us: שאו את ראש כל עדת בני ישראל – to lift us up in this world and enable us to reach the next world.

Everything that happens to us is with that positive goal in mind – and if we deviate from the elevated path Hashem will "have our heads" à la ישא פרעה את ראשך מעליך ותלה אותך על העץ, so that ultimately we can get back on track and achieve elevation again à la ישא פרעה את ראשך והשיבך על כנך

Hashem got our heads because Hashem got our backs at all times, and He will do whatever necessary to ensure that we ultimately come out ahead and are zoche to ויָרֵם קְרוֹן לְעַמּוֹ – a life of רוממות – elevation – in both worlds.

There is nothing neutral about Klal Yisroel, because there is nothing natural about Klal Yisroel!

This applies to every Yid; no exceptions. שאו את ראש כל עדת בני ישראל



Good Shabbos!